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RICHERICA

I first heard the name Ciro Nieli from the guy who created the comic book character, "The Flaming Carrot."

Seriously, his name is Bob Burden. Awesome guy, a true pioneer of the black-and-white comic boom in the early '80s and a legacy of work still relevant today. Regardless, I was talking to Bob about this new animation project I was developing, and he said, "You have to work with Ciro Nieli! He's the genius who created Super Robot Monkey Team Hyper Force Go!"

He was right, I'd seen SRMTHFG, and it WAS brilliant. Unfortunately, my project fell apart shortly thereafter and it was on to the next creative endeavor. As a result, I never got a chance to meet this Ciro guy that Bob had raved about.

The second time I heard the name Ciro Nieli was a year or so later. I was working on another new animated concept at Film Roman, when the very talented boss of everything at that time, Jay Fukuto, suggested we team up with this incredibly talented kid he'd worked with before, and wanted to work with again . . . his name was Ciro Nieli. He said he had just finished a season on *Teen Titans* and might be available.

Okay, that's twice I heard his name from two people I respected very much, now I really need to meet this guy! Jay set up a brief meet-and-greet that suddenly went on for hours. We hit it off right away, and ended up talking more about comics, movies, and monster stuff we liked than the project we were supposed to be discussing—it was awesome. But, as many things in Hollywood go, this project ALSO never got off the ground . . . but our friendship did, and we kept in touch.

A few years later, I got a note from Ciro with some VERY exciting news: Nickelodeon had acquired the rights to create a new TMNT animated series, and they loved his pitch for the new direction—he was now going to head ALL the creative on it! Cowabunga!

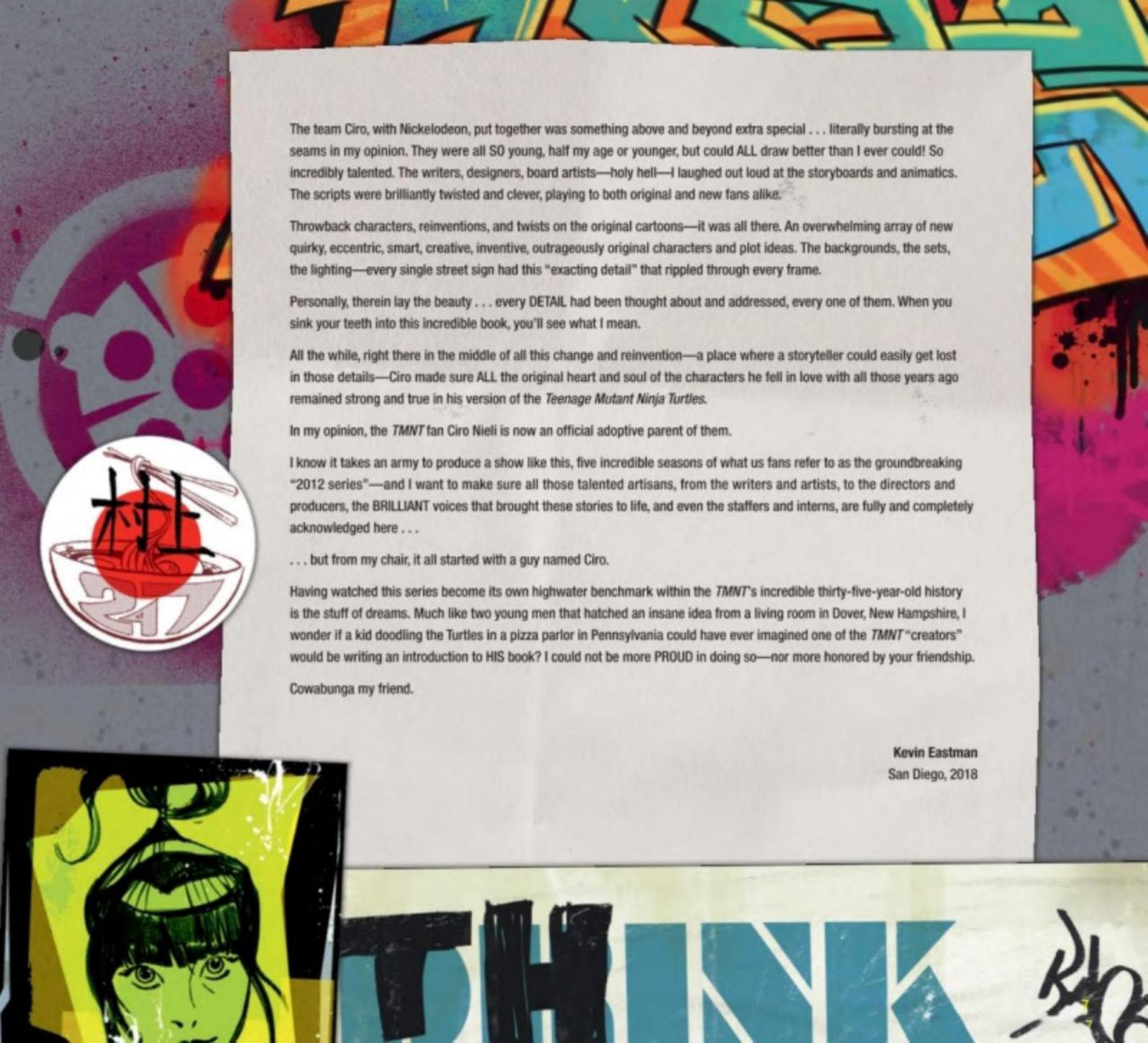
I was SO excited for him, and if he was nervous, it didn't show. He was a life-long "Pop Culture Junkie" as mentioned above, a confident storyteller, and a very skilled artist from the work I saw on his other series, and there was no doubt he would put a truckload of passion into it. Besides, I knew he grew up on the East Coast, Pennsylvania in fact, that his dad owned a pizza place, Antonio's, and he'd spent a chunk of his childhood eating pizza and drawing turtles—he was one of the original TMNT army of fans from the late '80s! Peter Laird and I had corrupted him from the beginning!

Once he started telling me what he planned to do with this new CGI series, I was impressed . . . like WOW, REALLY impressed. I thought he'd found the perfect path to hit the reset button with. Splinter was taller, the Turtles were smaller, April was younger, episode one would be the very first time the TMNT left the sewers on their own, and we'd all get to share the full adventure, together, again. I loved it! He had carefully created and crafted a whole new TMNT universe to play in: one where he could not only pull from and twist the wide variety of TMNT characters, plots, and ideas from various TMNT universes established over the past three decades—but left the door wide open to create TONS of new ones. Brilliant!

Nearly twelve months flew by when he called and invited me over to the Nickelodeon Animation Studio offices in Burbank to show me what they had been doing . . . I was blown away.

Like REALLY blown away.







TEENAGE MUTANT NINSA MUTATION 1984 PHILADELPHIA I was ten years old. My mother, who nurtured my love of all things creative, drove me out of the way to a place I couldn't possibly have dreamt existed yet, a comic book shop. As I entered the threshold of the converted bungalow shack, my senses filled with the aroma of old baseball cards and rotting wooden beams. My eyes scanned the corkboard walls, covered with tales of Dell, Marvel, Gold Key, and the DC heroes of old. I made my way to the new arrivals rack and there it was; it took me by surprise but it was something special. I dug deep: some lint, a dollar bill, and a few quarters covered the whopping price tag of \$1.50. As my mom and I made the long drive home, I was silent, unaware of the miles or time, face buried in my new comic prize. I was lost in a story of tragedy, honor, and heroes. I was home. That book was Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1 by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird, it would become the foundation of my adolescent creativity. As a boy I worked for my father, I sat at the counter of our family pizza shop for years. I preferred to draw turtles on the guest checks, or laying out comics pages on the backs of menus to filling sodas and making the hoagies or cheesesteaks. As the years passed, I watched TMNT undergo endless evolutions: a runaway hit cartoon, the all-time top-selling toy line, cereal, a beautiful Henson movie, rock-and-roll concerts, a female turtle . . . there was no end! I would always miss the simplicity of Kevin and Peter's Mirage Studio-era Turtles. 2009 LOS ANGELES I had been working for some time in animation, but dealing with the spandex-clad adventures of the big properties had run its course. I was going through a difficult personal time and desperately needed something inspiring, something familiar. Reading that TMNT was acquired by Nickelodeon, I would walk into their offices and tell them that I was, "the guy for the job"! My arrogance was met with challenge. Birk Rawlings, the head development executive, told me to come back when I could prove that I was . . . "the guy." It was the week just before Halloween. I returned to the Nickelodeon offices with five pieces of color art, printed on giant boards. The art depicted the Turtles fighting monsters, ninjas, and aliens, Leonardo as well as lair shenanigans with April O'Neil. My pitch was simple: turtle brotherhood and weird characters in a dangerous world having fun. The simplicity struck a chord, and my gamble to be true to Kevin and Peter's original vision—had paid off. In the then-existing media environment of reinvention, the simplicity of "camaraderie" had been the answer. The TMNT story I had always yearned for would be told. Then the work began . . .

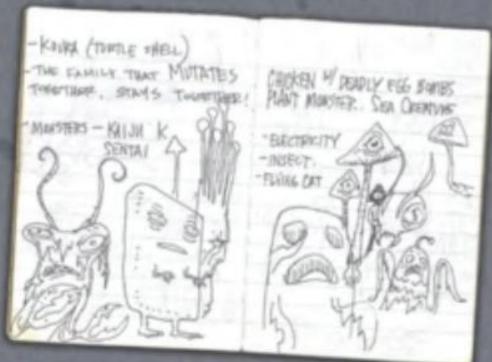




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LEADER / MOGST

DONATELLO - PURPLE / BO'

THURENTOR / ENGINEER

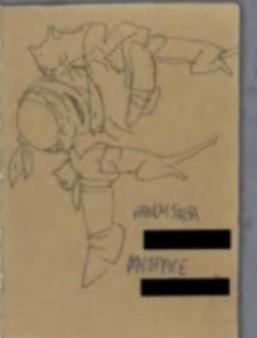
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MICHELANGELO - ORANGE / CHICK

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MAGIC BOOK

In the weeks leading up to my formal pitch at Nickelodeon, I carried a tiny book in my back pocket. Anywhere and anytime I would jot ideas that were crucial to the DNA of this version of the TMNT, formulating early designs that I would eventually polish for my official presentation. Food stains were a bonus.





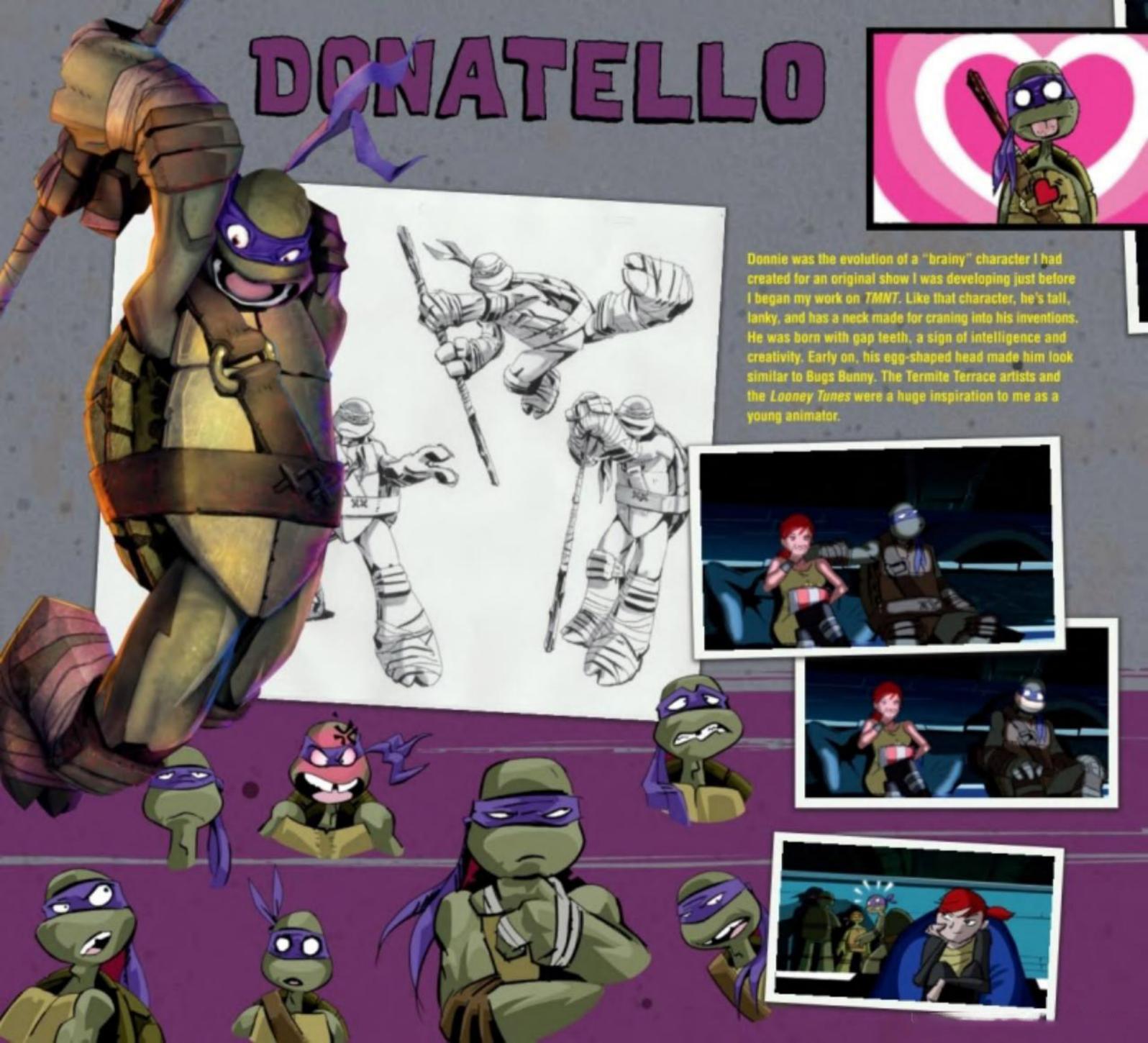




Eventually, I was able to bring talented friends along to help me flesh out the pilot story. Alan Wan led my storyboards, Irineo Maramba created characters, Byron Penaranda did machines, Rodel Gravo was the architect of this NYC, and Nadia Verbenova brought it to life with her paintings. They would become my leads . . . they were the Five Deadly Venoms.





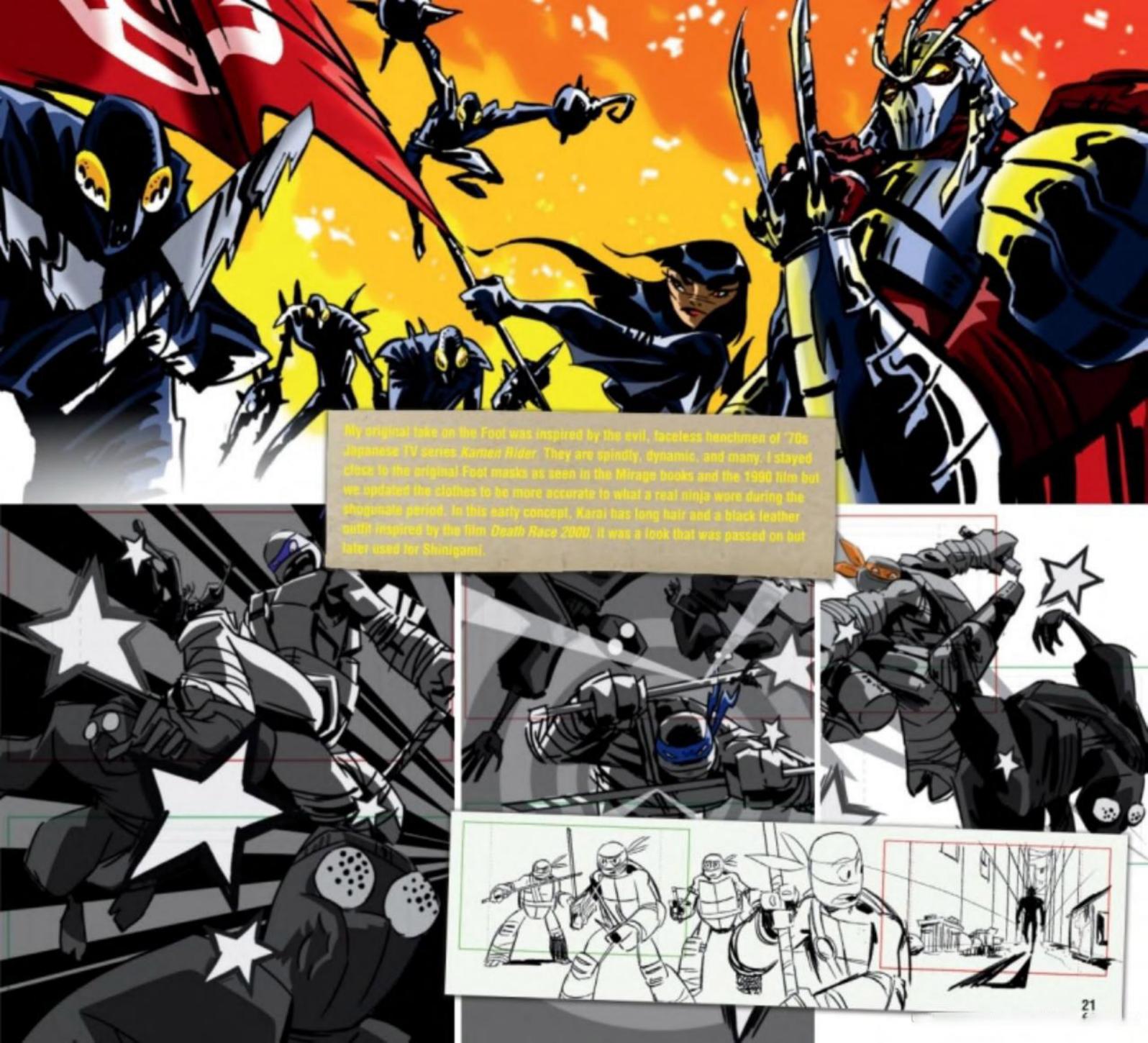




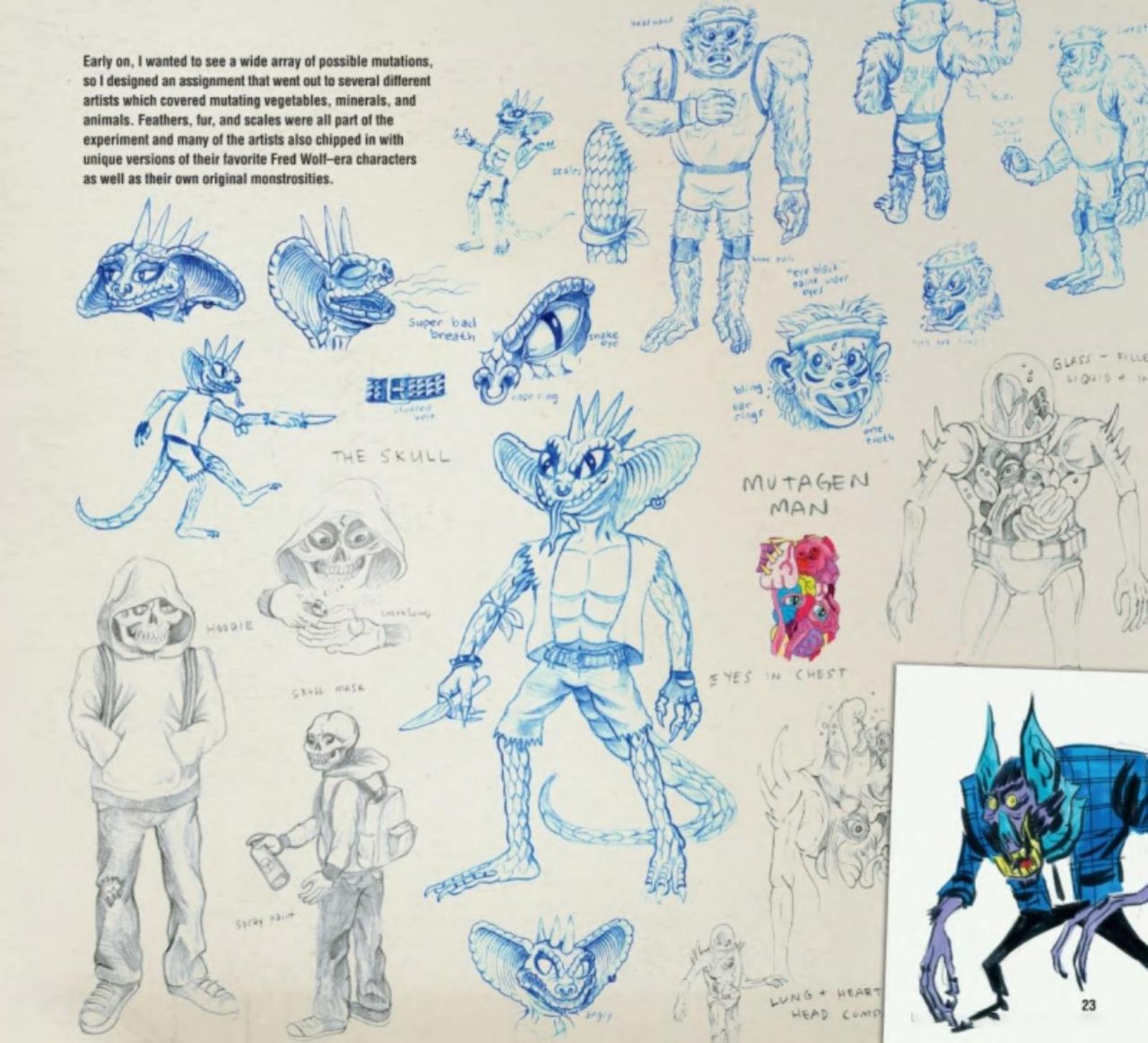


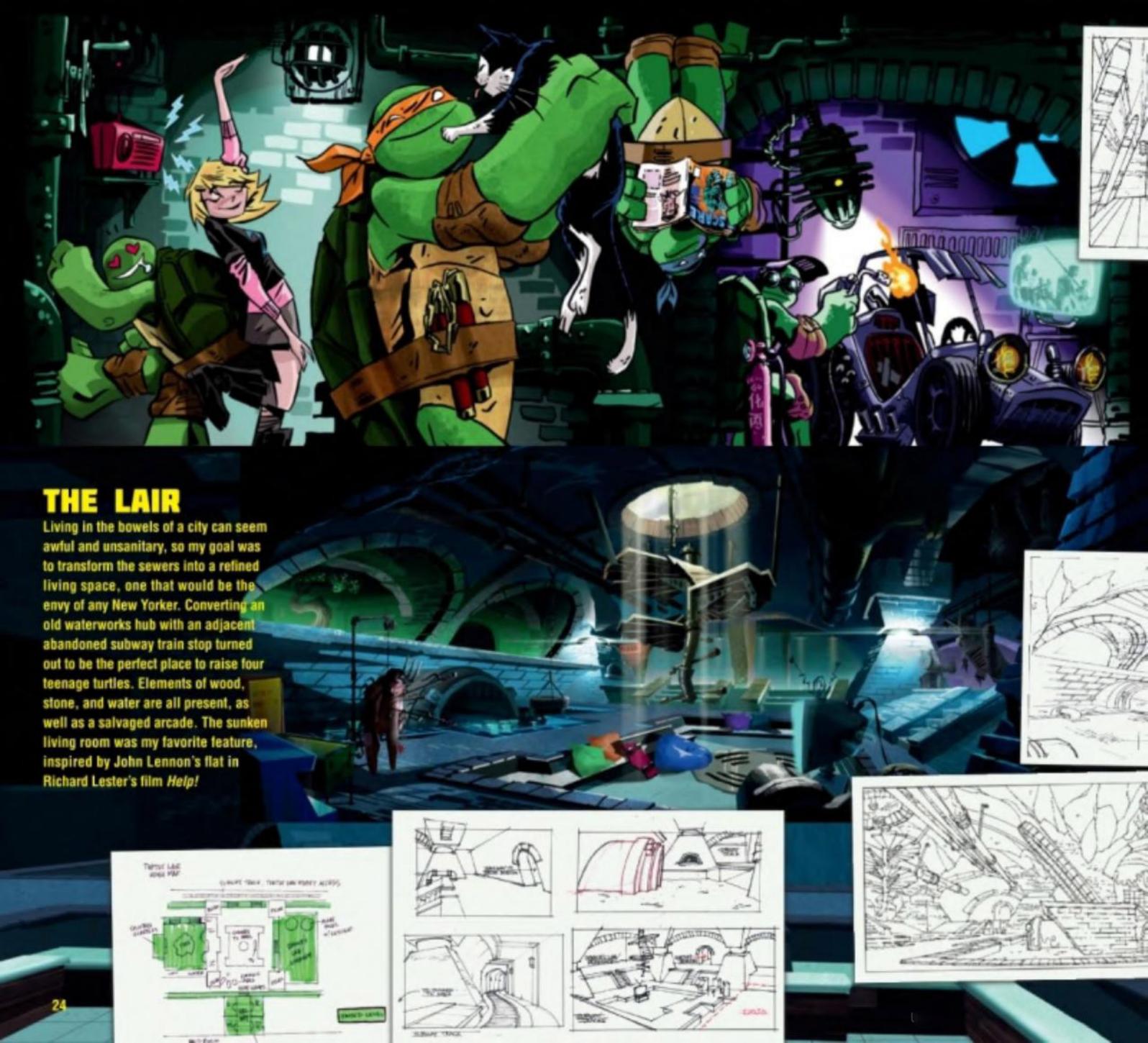


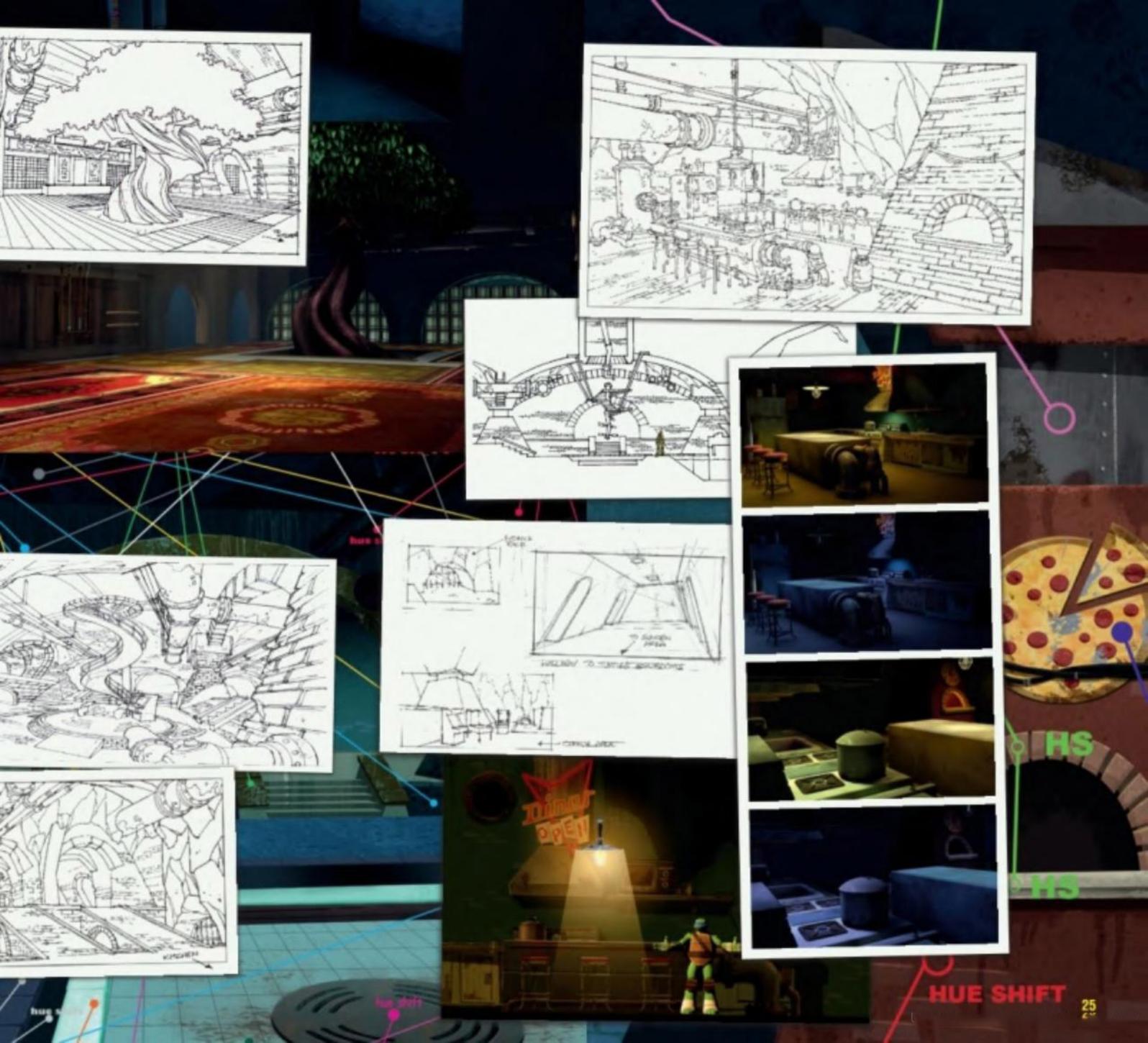


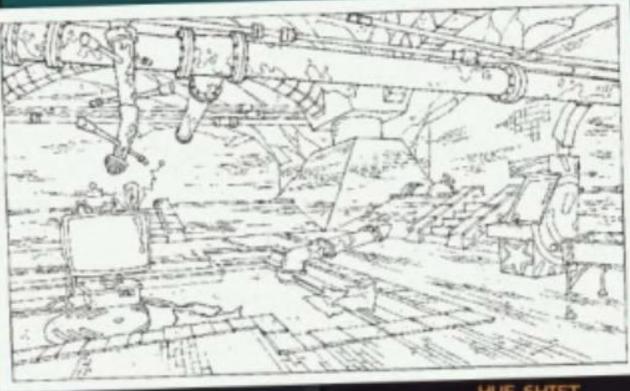


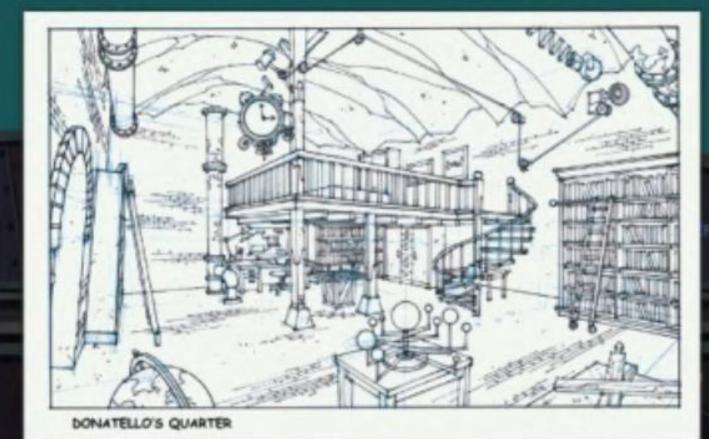






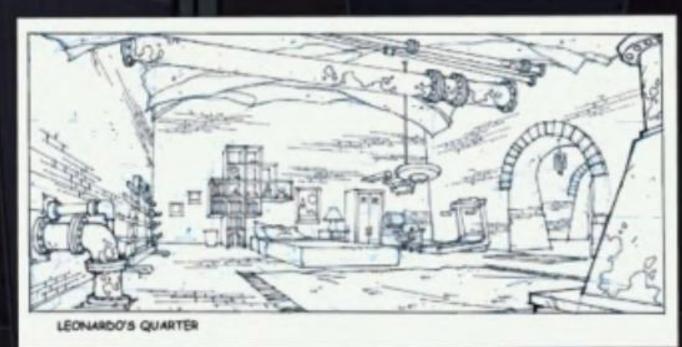


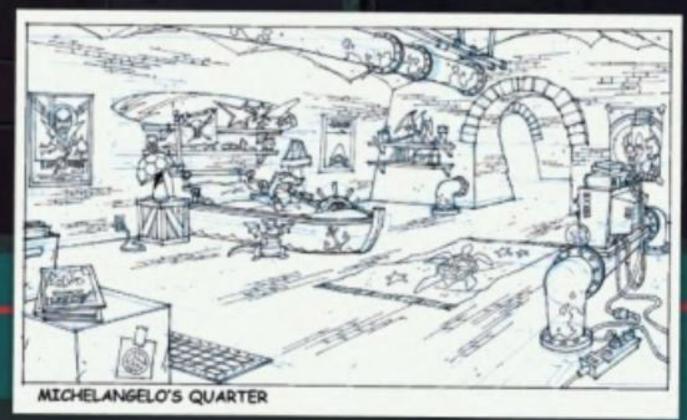


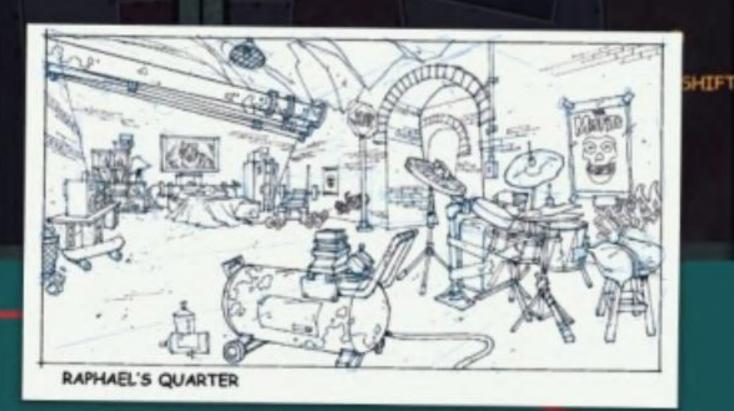


HUE SHIFT









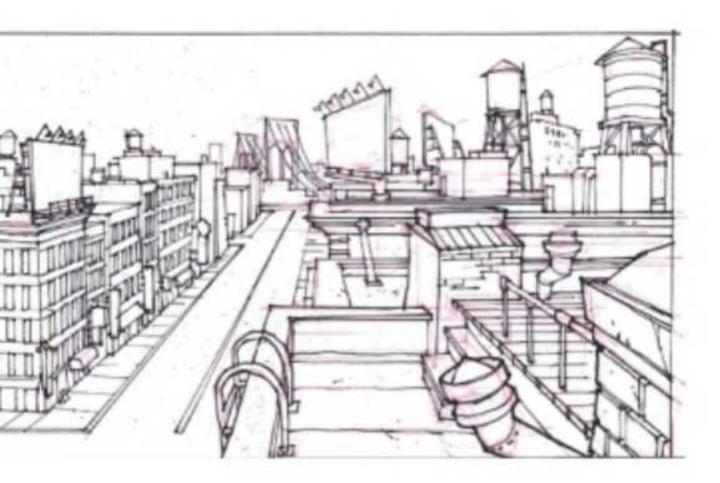
Rodel Gravo's early concepts of the Turtle's bedrooms. I remember we sat down and listed all the things each turtle could possibly have in their rooms. That was a fun day and a really great exercise in fine-tuning the Turtles' teen personalities. Unfortunately, we never built Donnie's or Leo's bedrooms.

IRTY 0



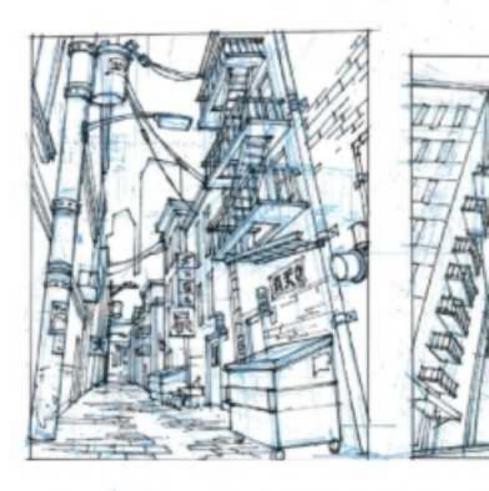




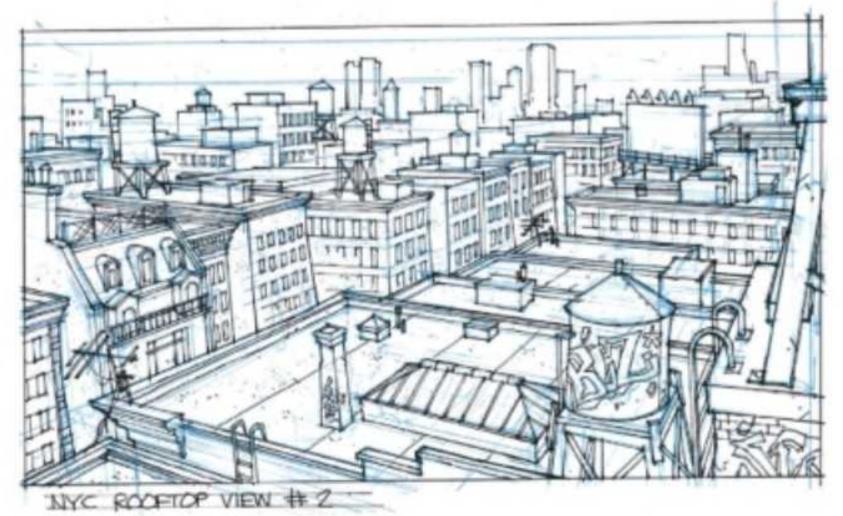


THE HAUNTS

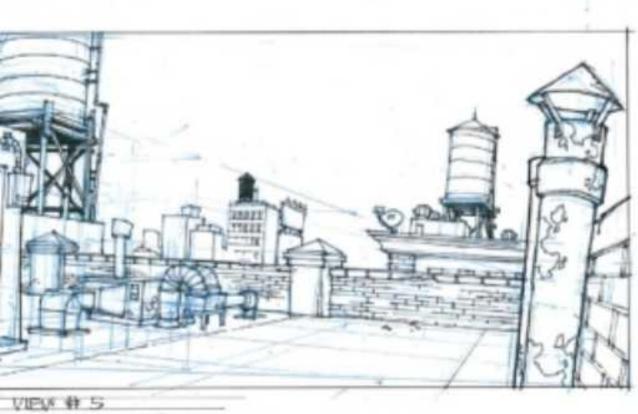
Every superhero show has different needs from their city. Superman flies high above skyscrapers, Batman hides among the grim gargoyles, while Spider-Man clings closely to the brick facades of downtown. TMNT's Manhattan is all about rooftops and alleys, Rodel's concepts explore the potential teen-ninja hangouts, hidden high above the bustle of the streets.

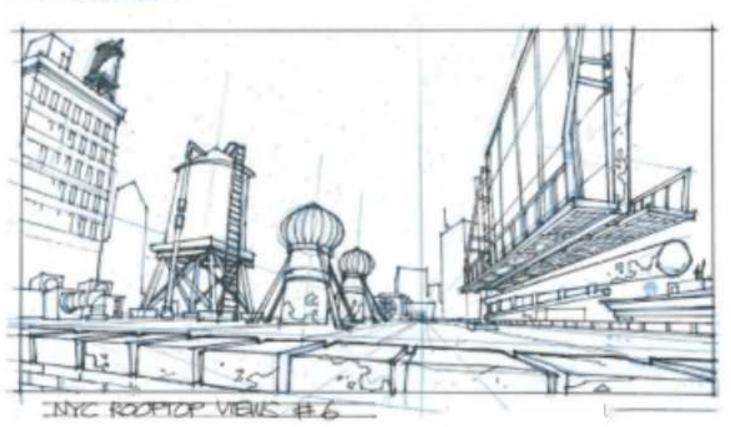




















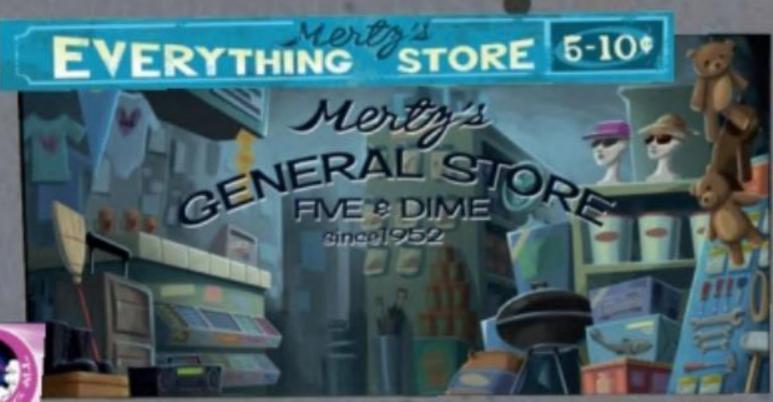




























BAD SIDE OF TOWN

I needed that "uh-oh, where am 17." vibe from a location. The kind of place Charles Bronson would run around with a .38, or Robocop would blow up cars—a set straight out of an '80s Cannon film. It's more the South Bronx than Manhattan, but hey, this is a fantasyl I built this with my favorite story, the Mirage Leonardo one-shot and #10 in mind. In that story. Leo is ambushed by the Foot in the snow while he is headed home for Christmas Eve dinner. He eventually ends up in a freezing slush pit at the bottom of a construction site. We ran out of money for that construction site during the initial city build, so we built a wooden fence outlining that area instead. Built much later, the full construction site was matched in seamlessly for the classic Cannon fight.









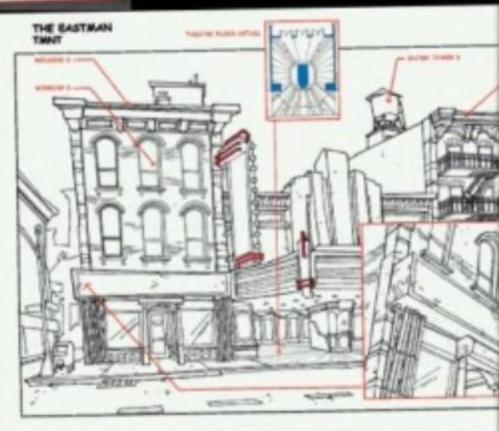


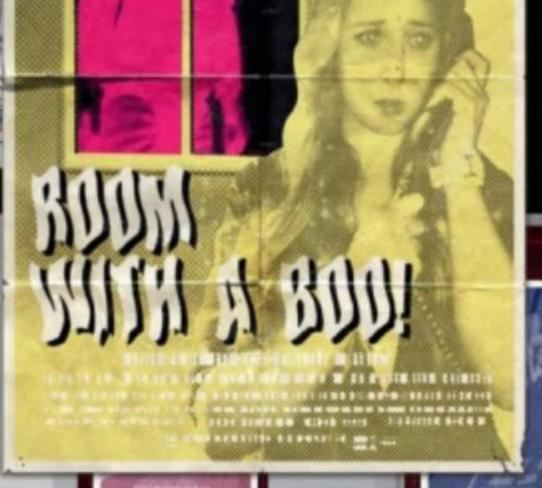


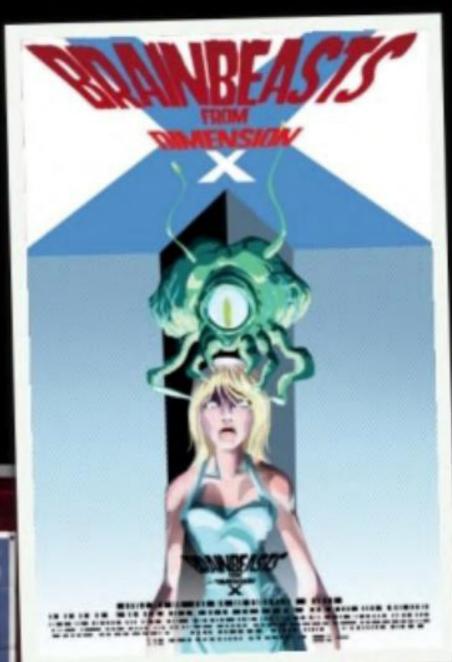




















In the original pilot, the Turtles sneak out of their lair for the first time to meet up with April O'Neil at the movies. This changed but I knew I still needed a movie palace in this world. I had the duty of designing the Argosy—its posters, signs, and marquee letters. I originally intended it to be the "Eastman Theater," but there was an unfortunate similarity to the well-known film company so it was changed. The highly detailed posters hang along the sidewalk while rows of lesser detailed posters lived deep behind its ticket booth, filling the scenes. I loved small touches like

foreshadowing the Kraang invasion story with a "Brainbeasts from Dimension X" poster. With its grand, art nouveau signage and a weathered marquee, the theater needed to feel like it had a rich history, a sense that it was built in the '30s. It was also fitted with a newer sign and grindhouse logo, updated sometime in the '70s. This may be my favorite spot in the city. Imagine seeing an all-night sci-fi/horror film fest there, then rolling next door to the Olympia diner for some pie and coffee!















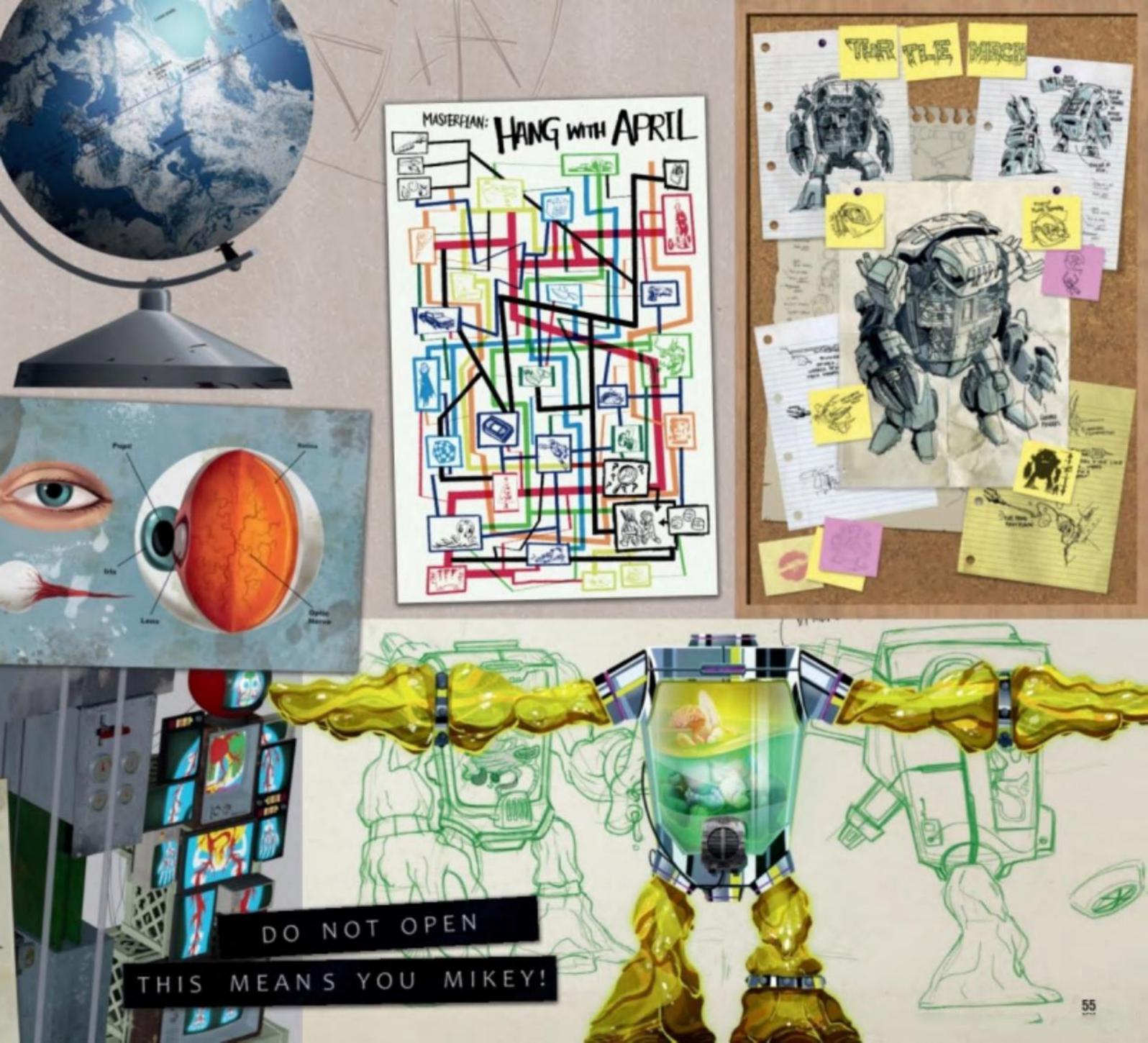


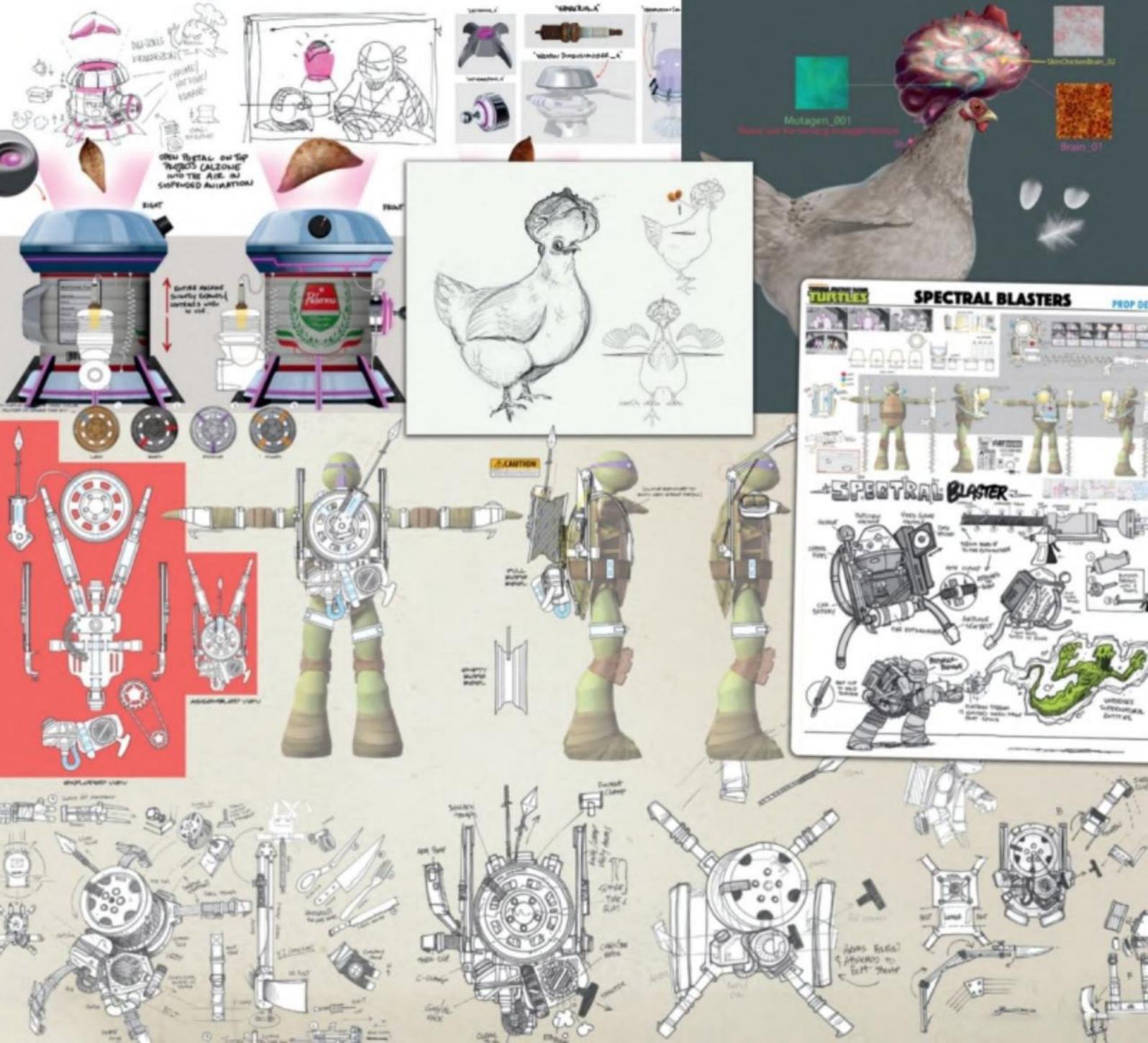














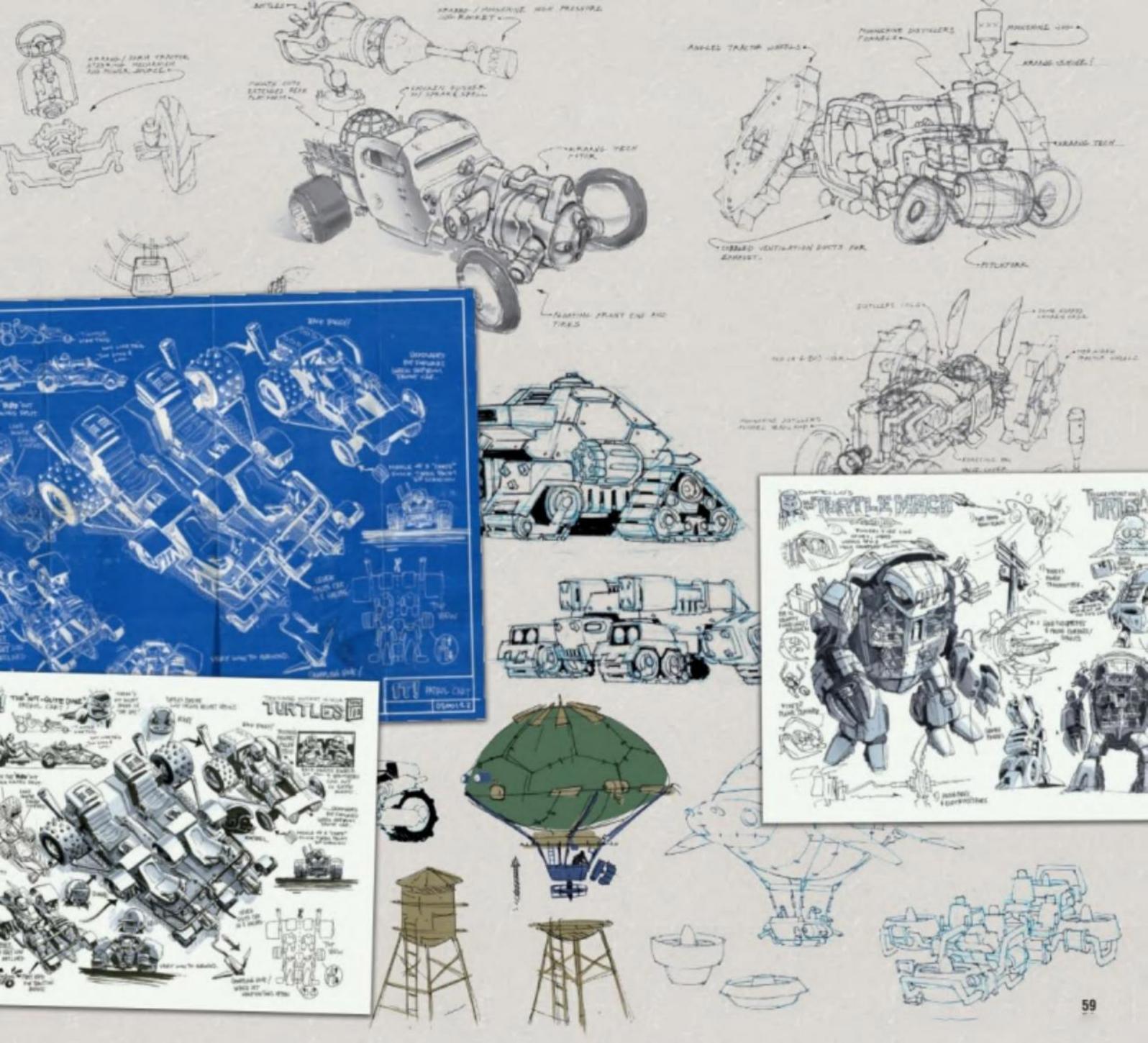
I didn't want this show to rely on unbelievable, shiny technology or finding all the answers on a magic turtle-computer (or the internet). Donatello's technology functioned just enough to support and progress the story's adventure, but not solve the mysteries outright. Things were amazing yet somewhat still arcane; the T-Phones are more walkie-talkie than smartphone, his Gameboy Turtle Tracker is a glorified Geiger-counter and the Grappling Gun was fashioned with a thread spool! The inventions have a childlike simplicity in their functional logic but they work without question.

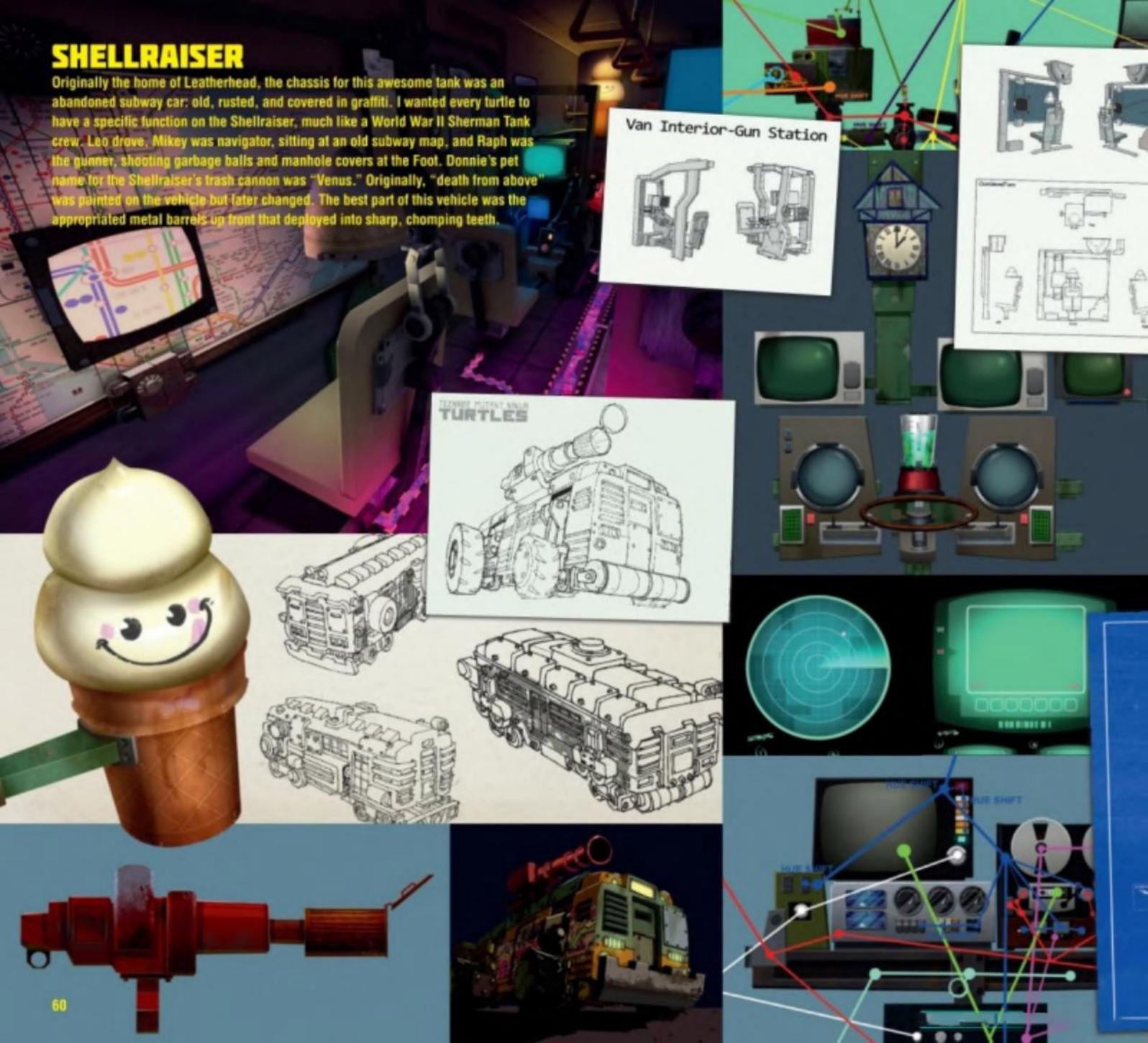
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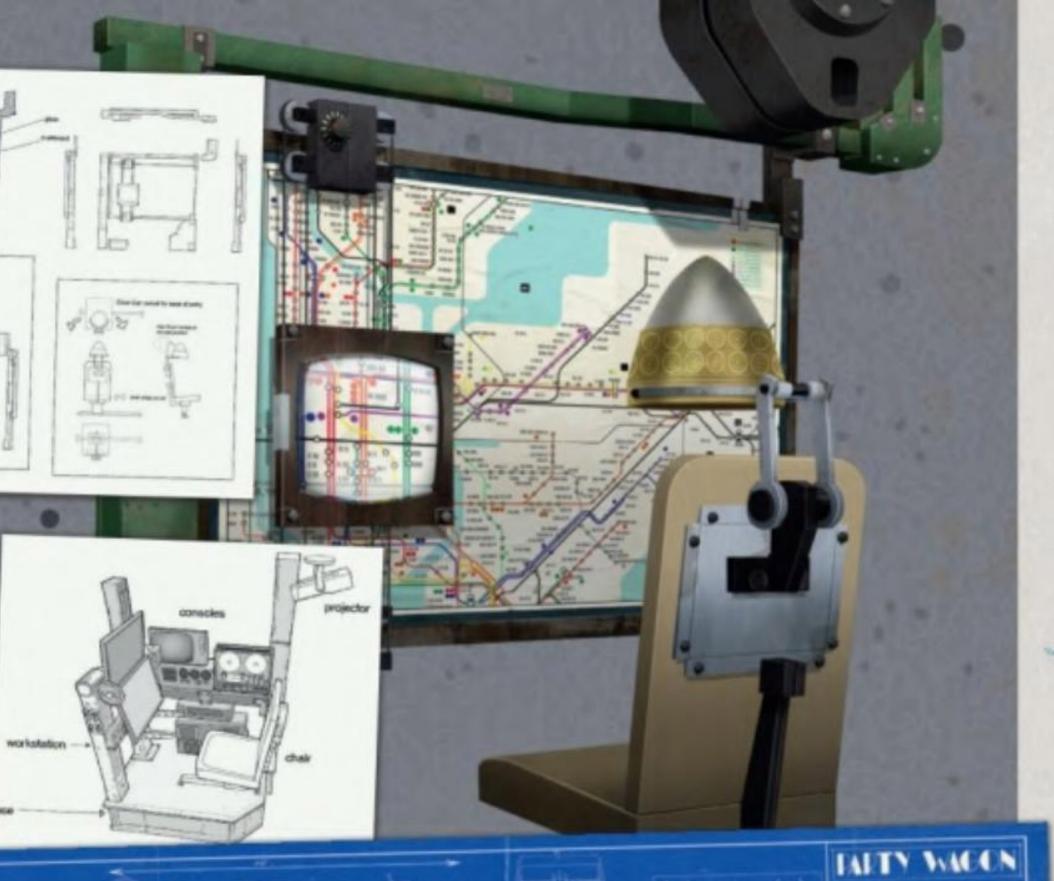
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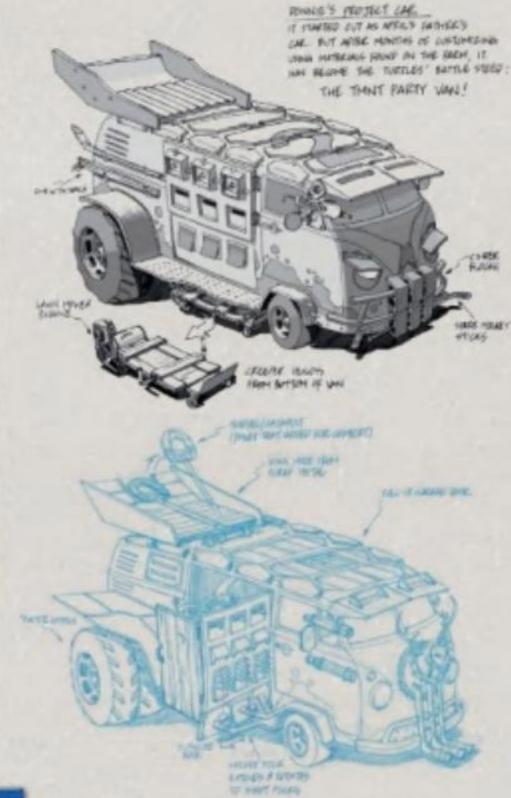










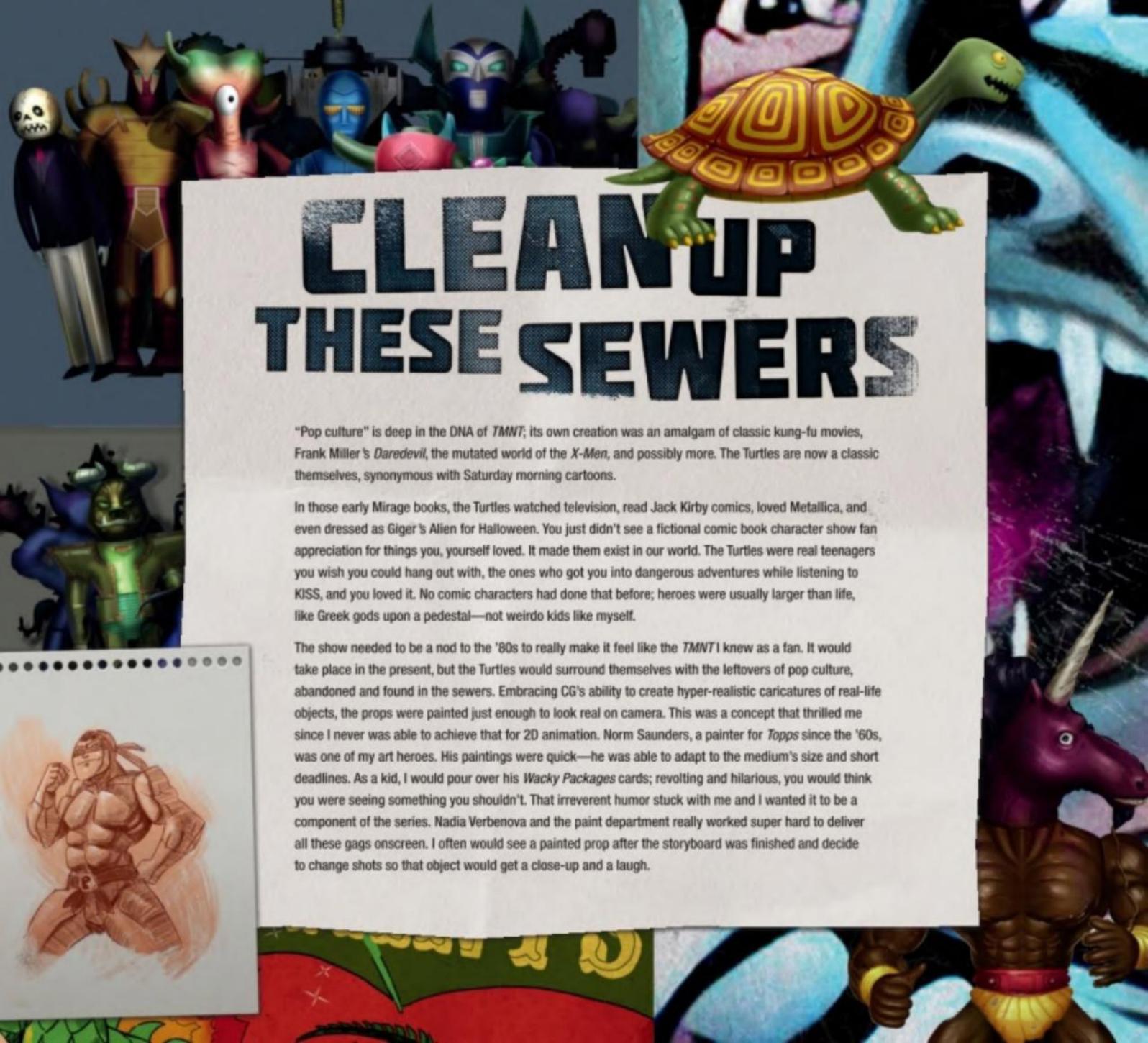


PARTY WAGON

Once the "Love Wagon" belonging to Kirby
O'Neil, the Party Wagon is the "Shellraiser-light"
designed to infiltrate the Kraang-occupied New
York City. It's smaller, faster, and the windshield
enables for an easier way to shoot fast-paced car
chases (Shellraiser had no windows). Its design
and color scheme were welcome throwbacks to
the '80s Fred Wolf Party Wagon. Art Lee's design
even included a motorized creeper that deployed
from below.









The crew was full of very knowledgeable comic book readers, so the subtleties would not be missed. We covered Marvel's monster reprints, Famous Monsters of Filmland, pre-code EC books, Kirby's '70s DC work, even Mad magazine; awesome to see onscreen, but it also meant we had to now create additional original comic book content. Cadaver Corps was an old idea I had for an animated horror series. It never happened but now Raphael gets to read it.





SEWER SHUCK





LE CORPS CADAVRES





MEAT MANT TOR GAINYS ASPARAGUST GRAIN GIRLT TORRESTHER FOR THE PROBETTY MARKATHEET





POSTERS AND MOVIES

Raph is the artist (he even had a barely seen airbrush setup in his room) so he needed posters that reflected his artistic tastes, but also his aggressive nature. Art legends like Frazetta and Pushead were are his thing. Mikey loves horror movies. even though they often scared him into trouble. Revisiting cult-classic films to invent new take movies was a highlight of the production. When designing the VCR, it was crucial we had old-school wood paneling and the top-loading feature. I still wish I could actually watch some of these VHS tapes (likely fished from Weirdo Video's dumpster on Bleecker).



A recent article in a New York tabloid reported large amounts of crossdiles living in tailets.

That magazine was wrong. What is living in your toilet is not a reptile.

K.R.U.D. is in your toilet.



They're not staying in your sewage anymore!



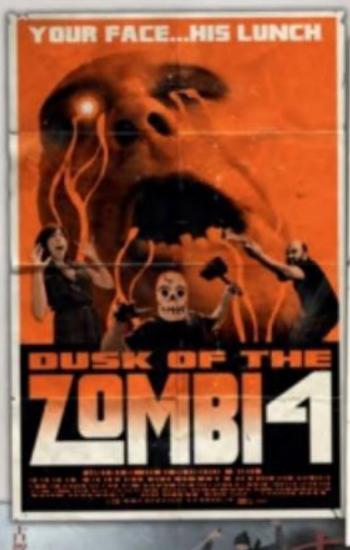
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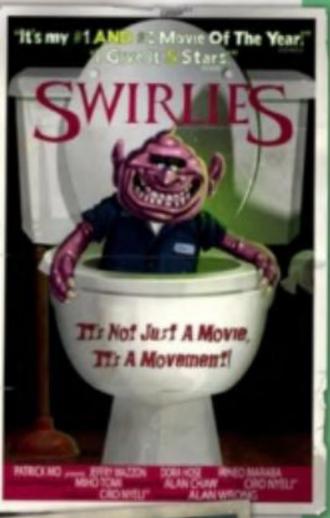




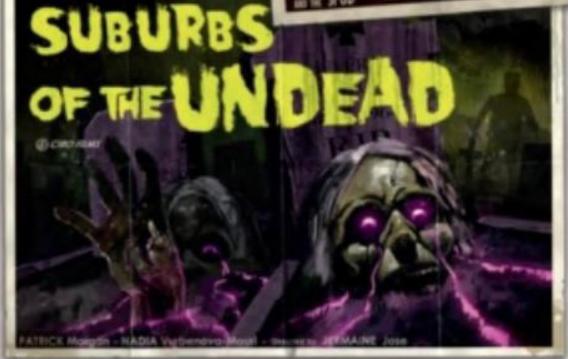




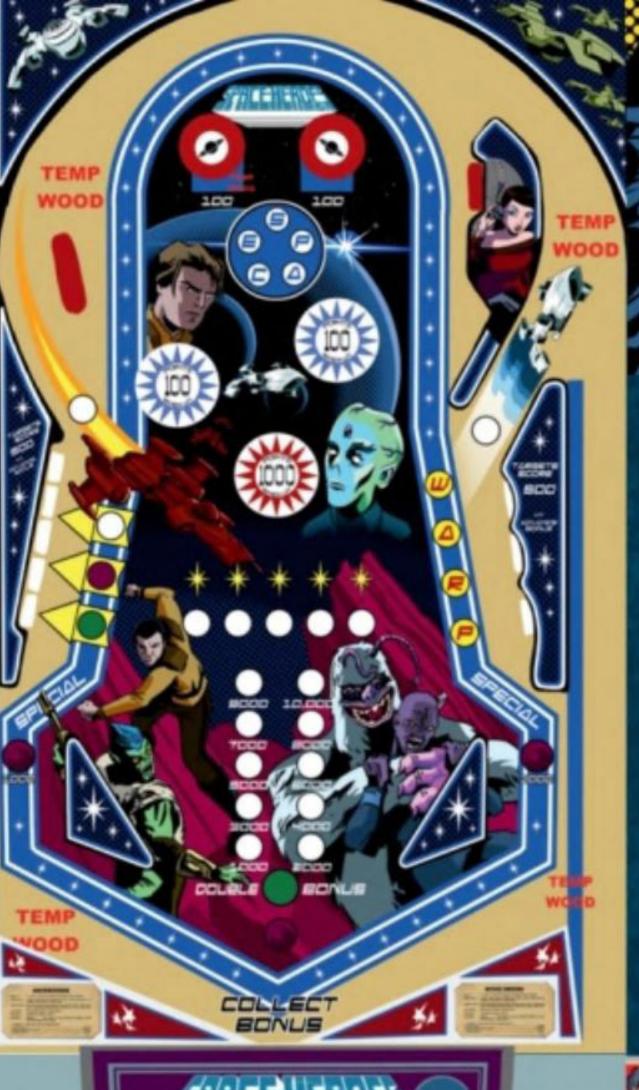




















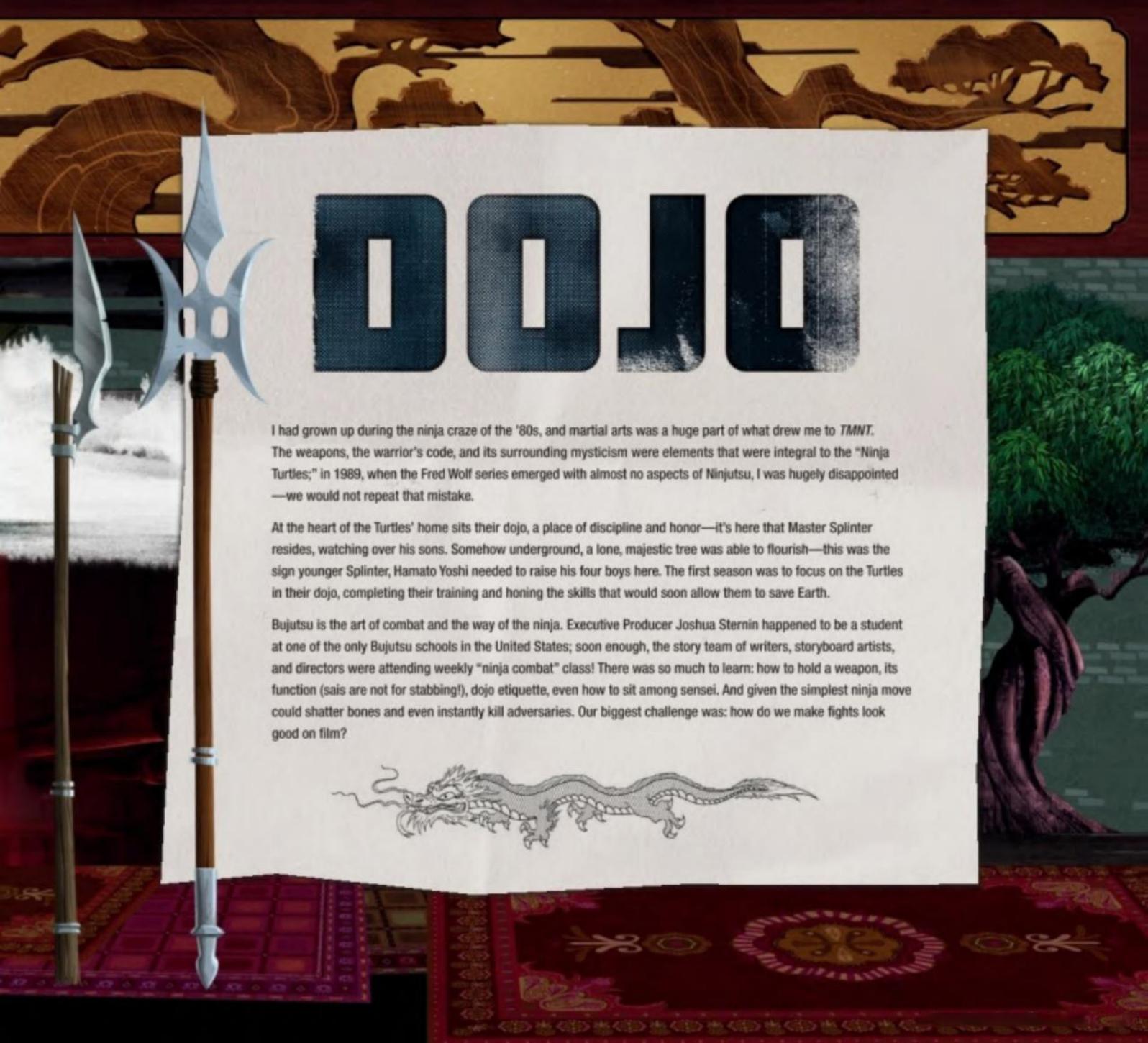












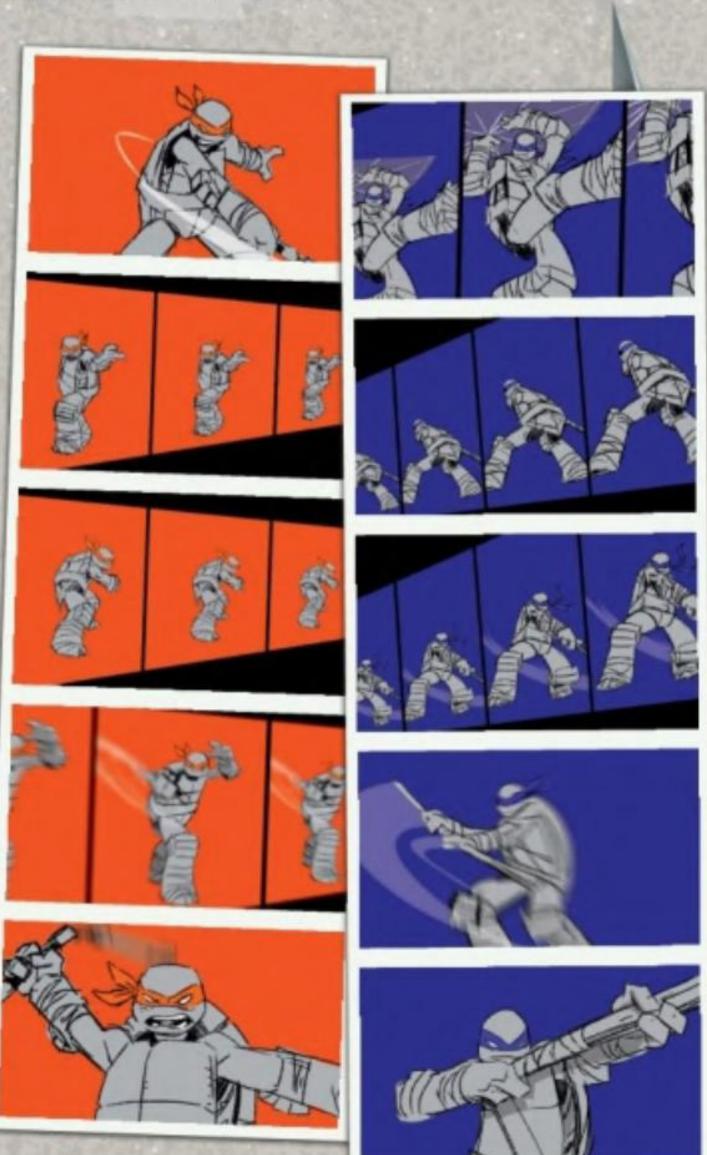


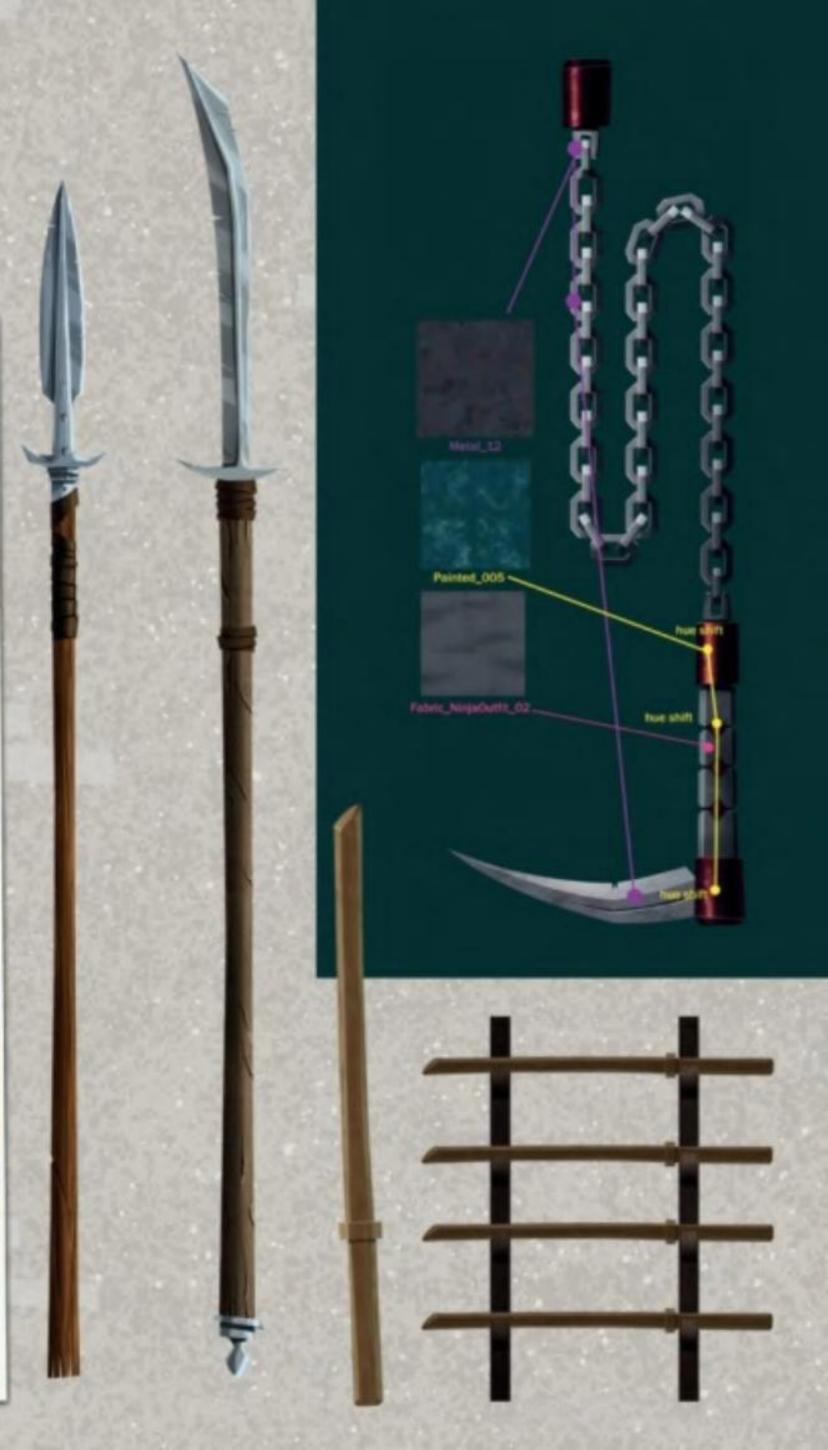






I wanted the Turtle weapons to be faithful to the original Mirage comics but also authentic historical ninja weapons. The nunchaku actually originate from Okinawan karate and are not true "ninja weapons," so I had them extended into proper, chained kusarigama. Donatello's bo staff had the addition of a bladed end, making it a classic ninja naginata. The weapons were fashioned by Master Splinter, in the Hamato family style, but later updated by his son, inventor Donatello.























SNAKE, DOG, ZOMBIE WOLF

CG is all about texture, so we went for it with dog fur and fish scales. Introducing chrome Baxter-tech as robo-legs fastened to a fish seems ridiculous and bizarre. Bradford would ultimately become fan-favorite Rahzar. By rotting away mass and exposing bones, Irineo gave Dogpound the new appearance of a rotted wolf monster.





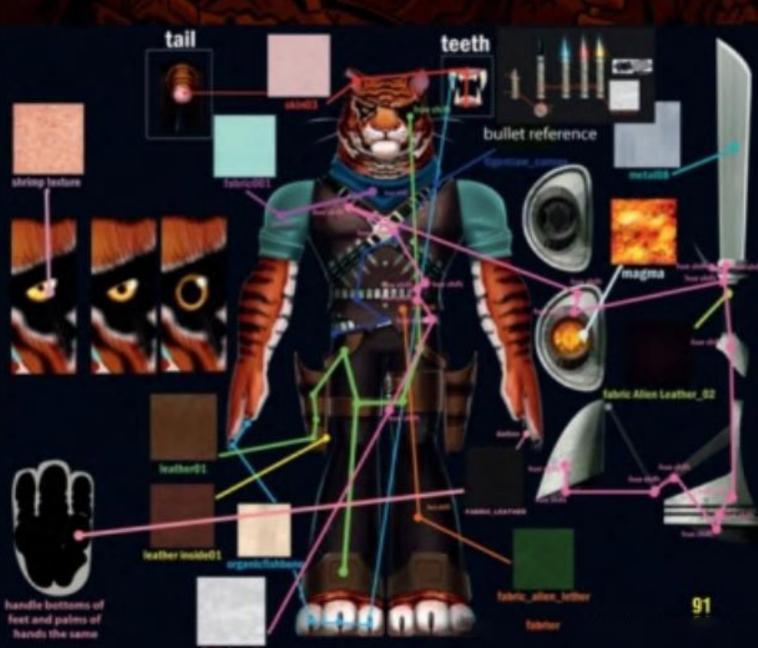




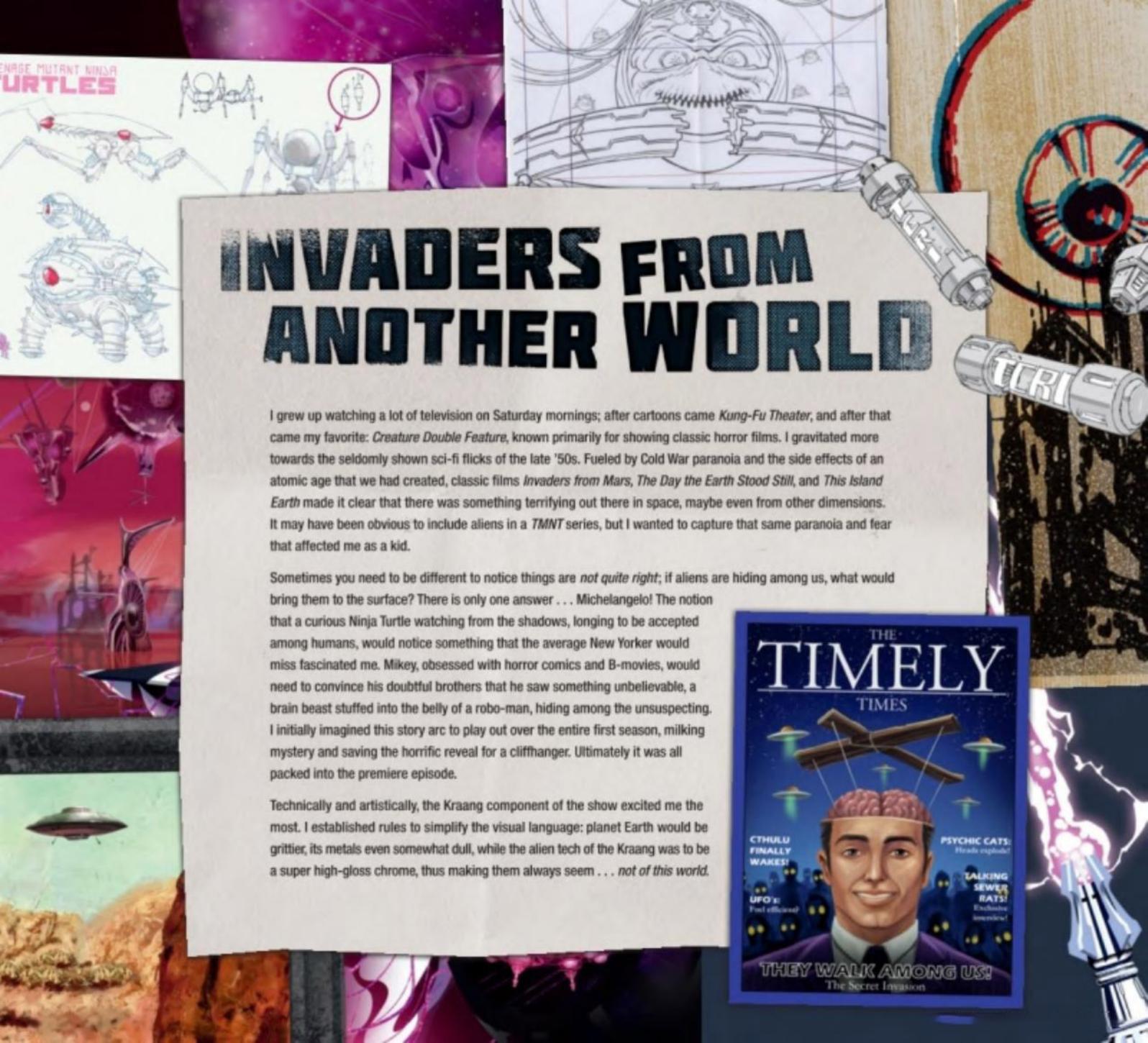
a gunslinger from El Topo, and he eventually became Japanese. His name

comes from Brandon Auman's old RPG character, a samurai tiger.









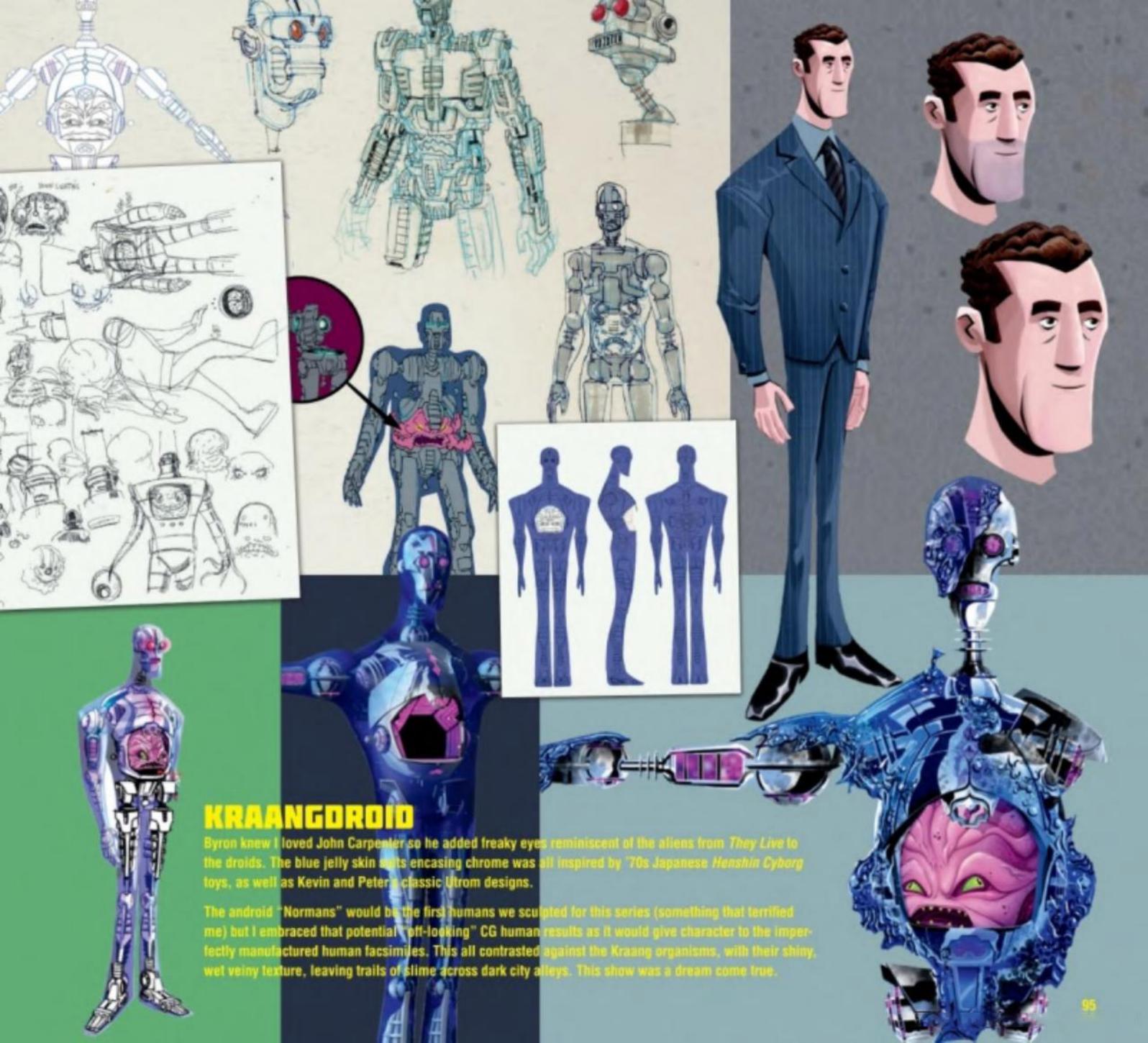


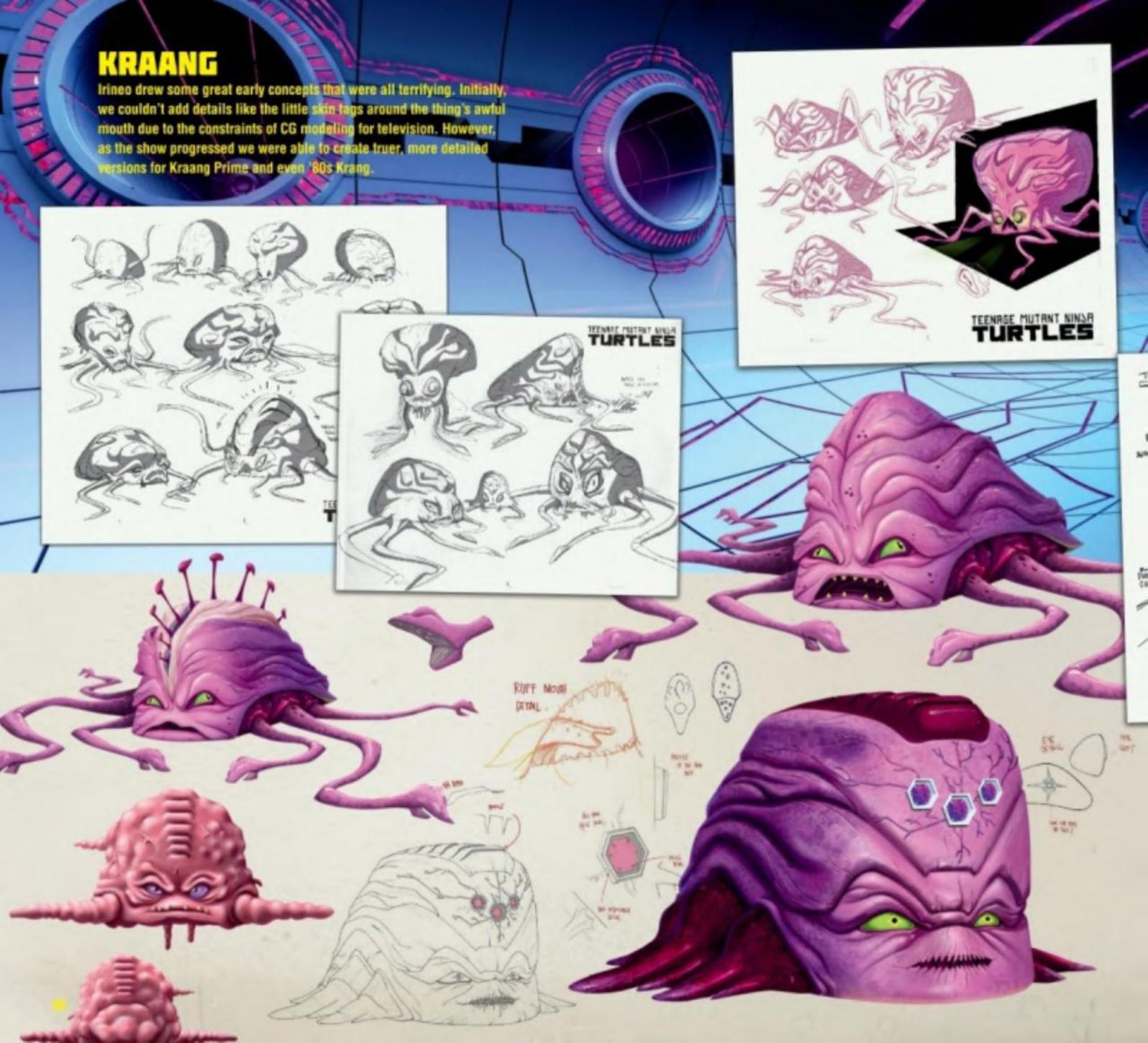


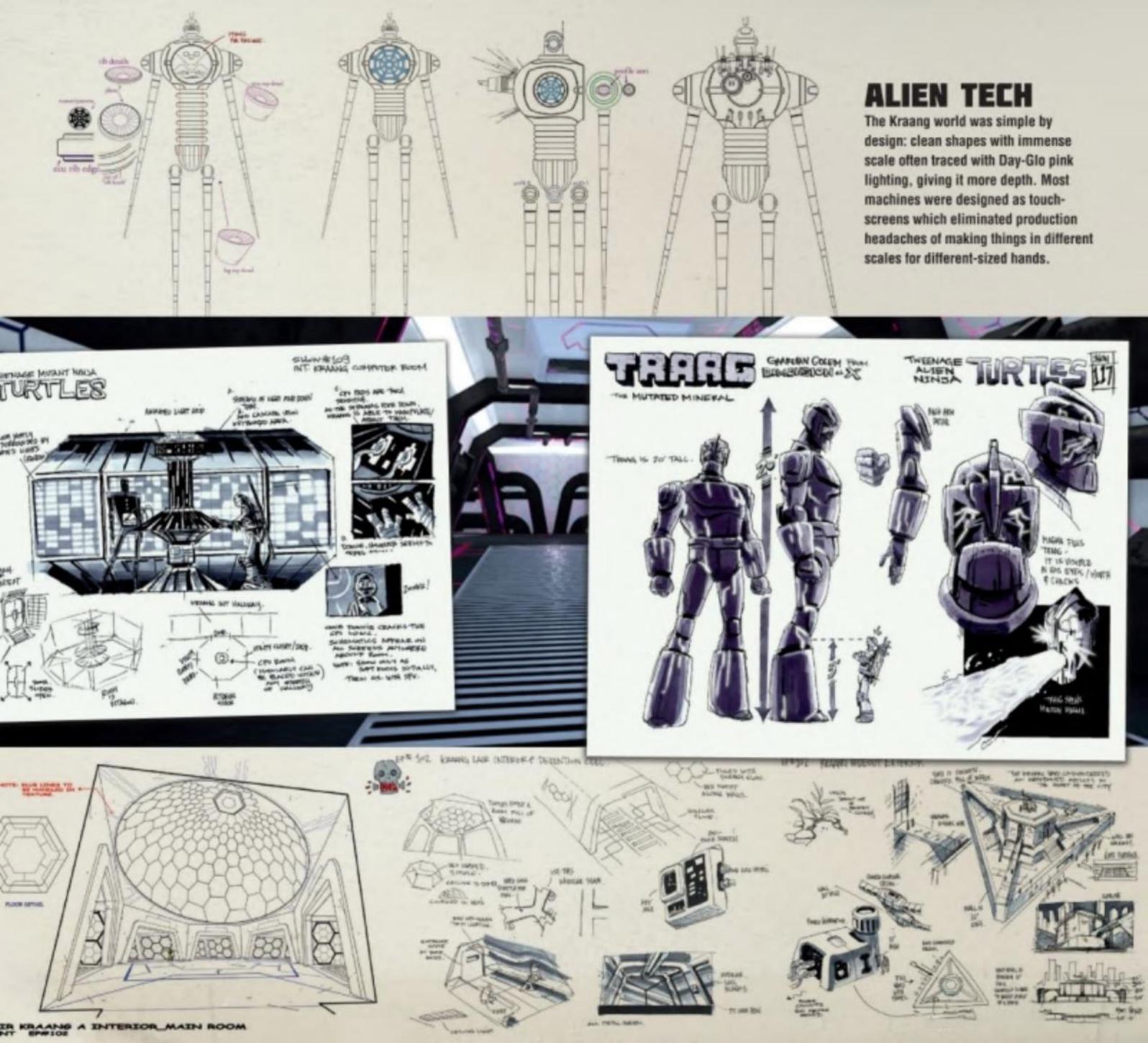
Jack J. Kurtzman
INVESTIGATOR
occult extra-terrestial supernatural
writer

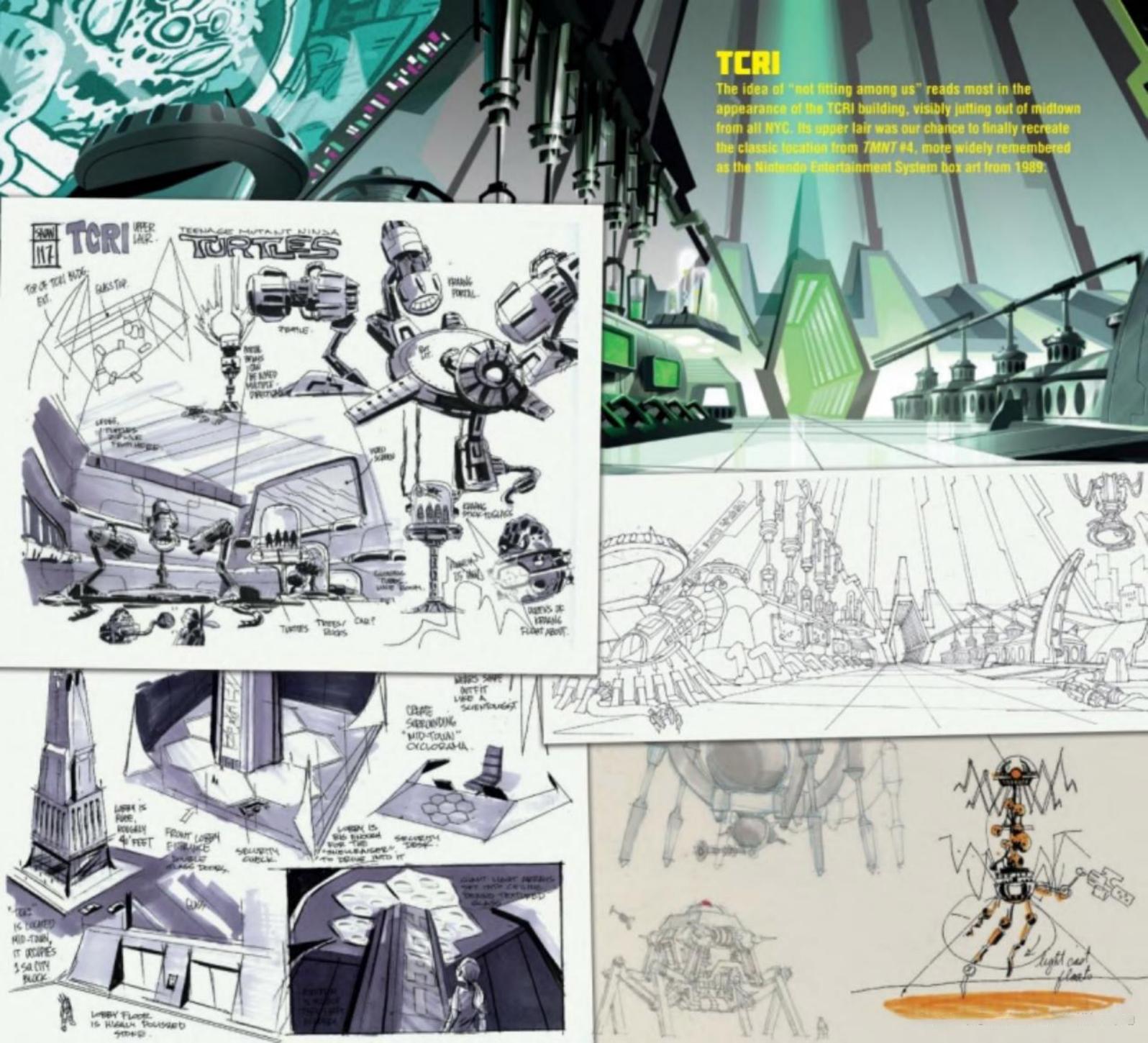
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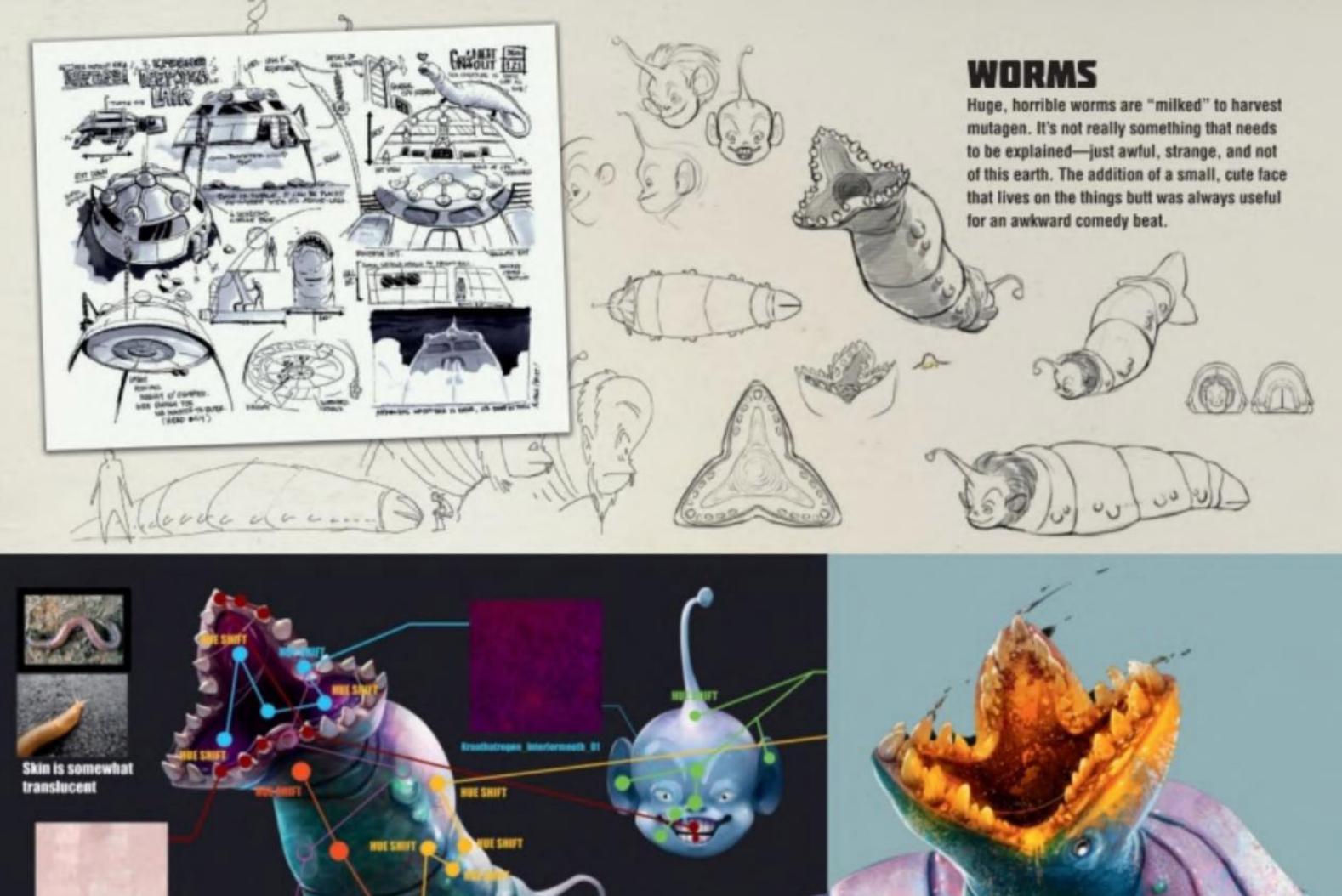




WGP

The Kraang create unfortunate experiments in their hopes to "recondition" the earth for their survival needs. The early concepts for April Derp were just too weird and upsetting, they cannot be printed here! Ms. Campbell heads up the WGP which I placed secretly below Madison Square Garden.









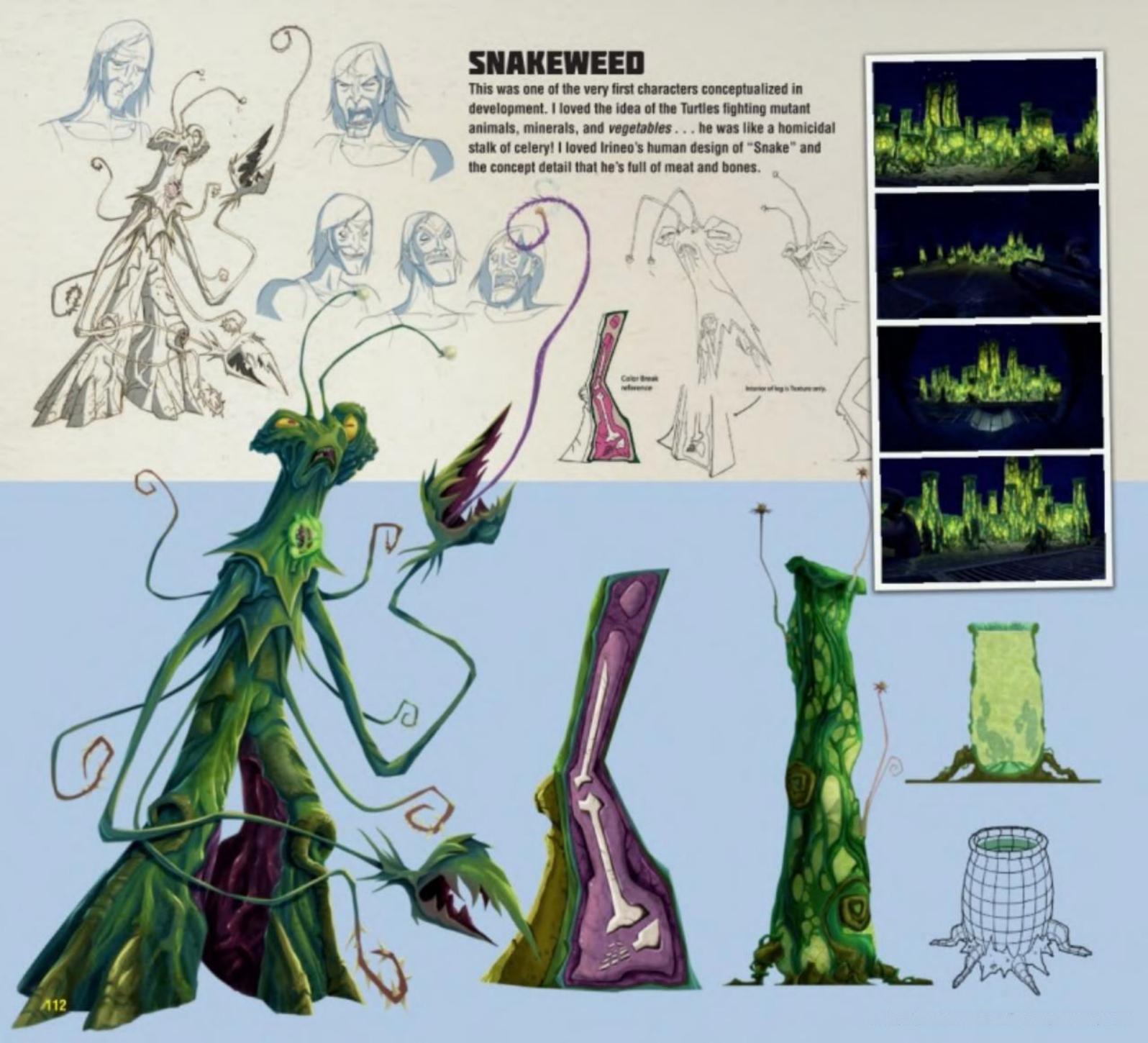










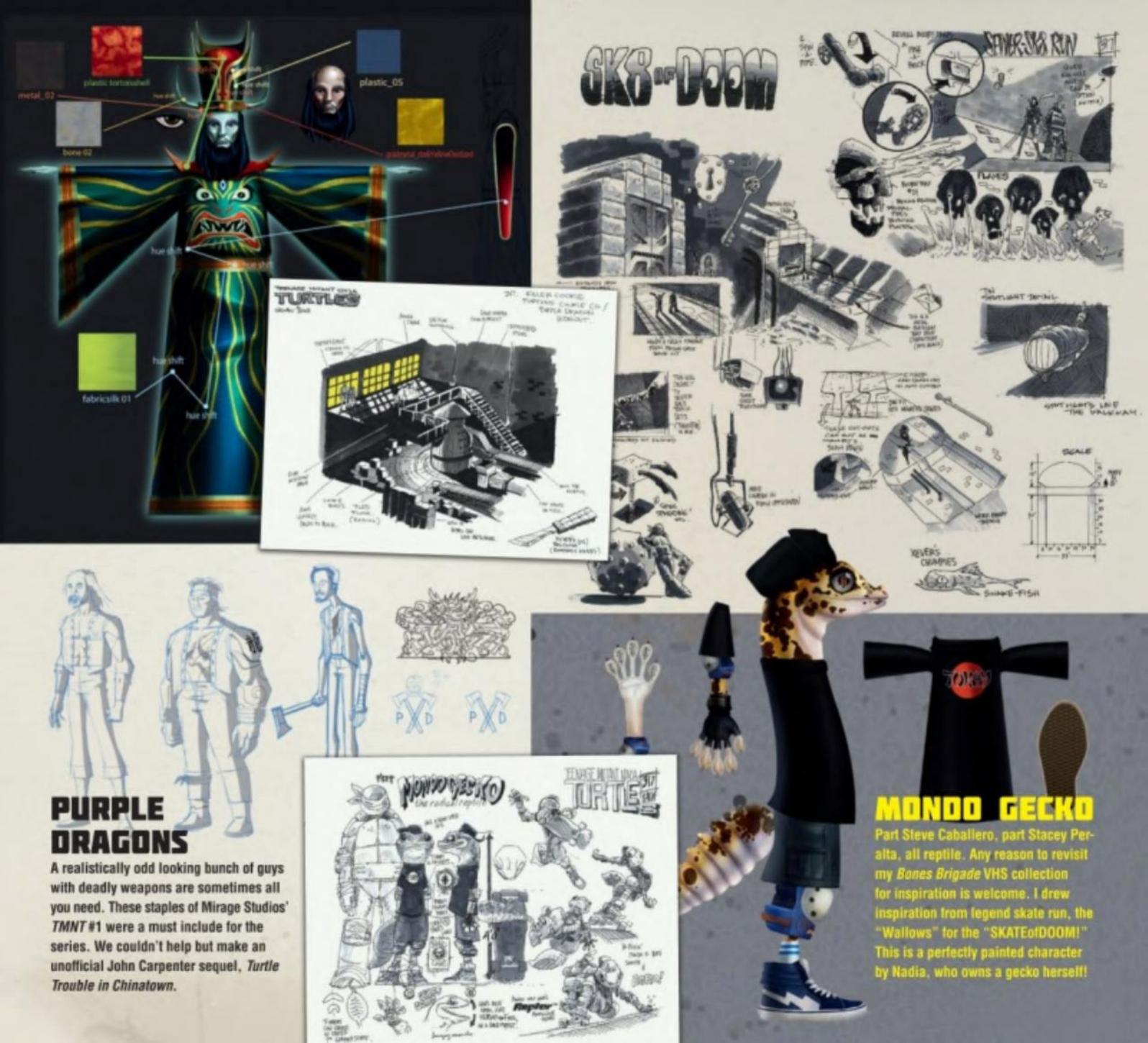




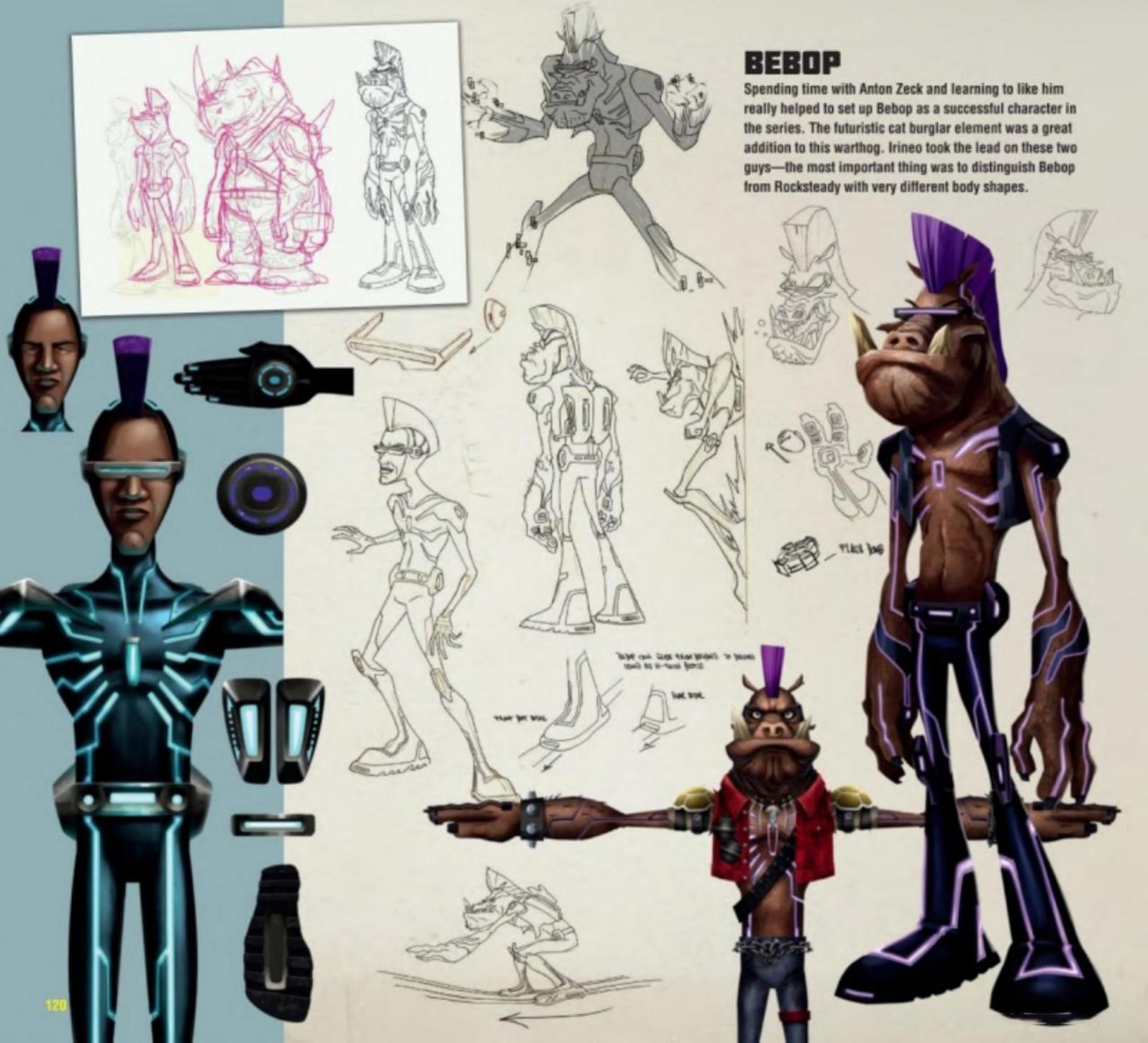




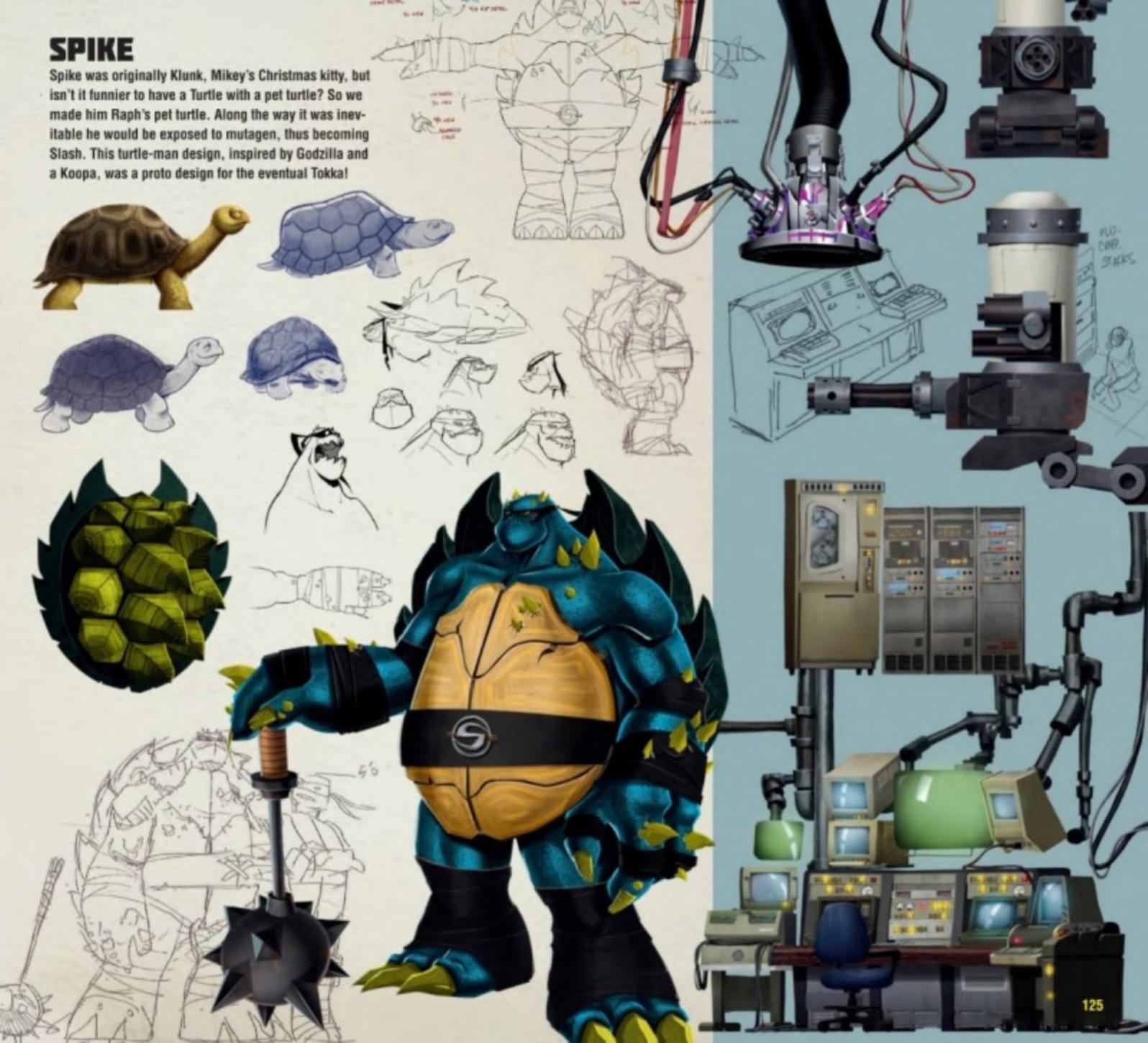




















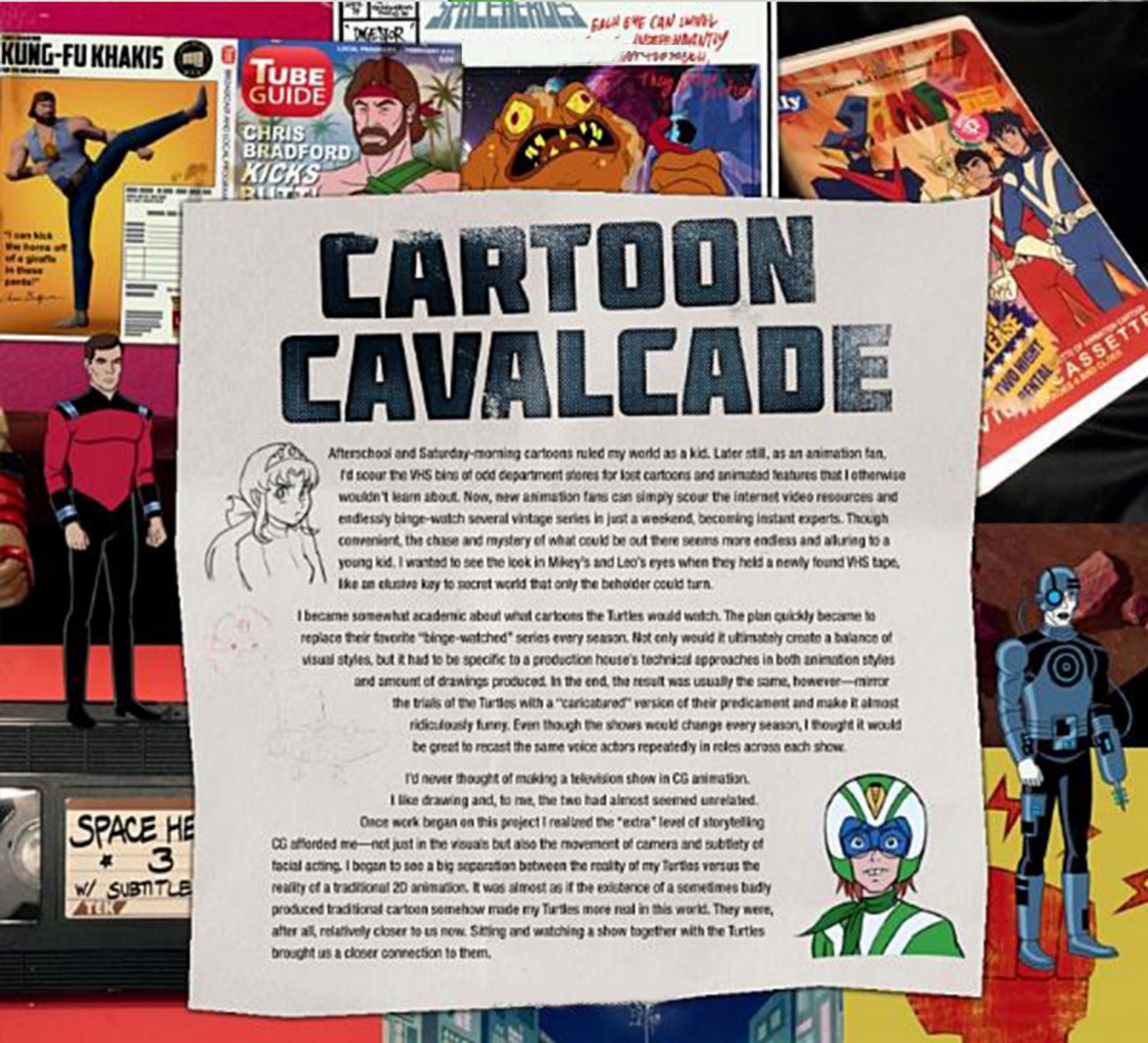




























FREHERIES.

THE NEXT BENERATION









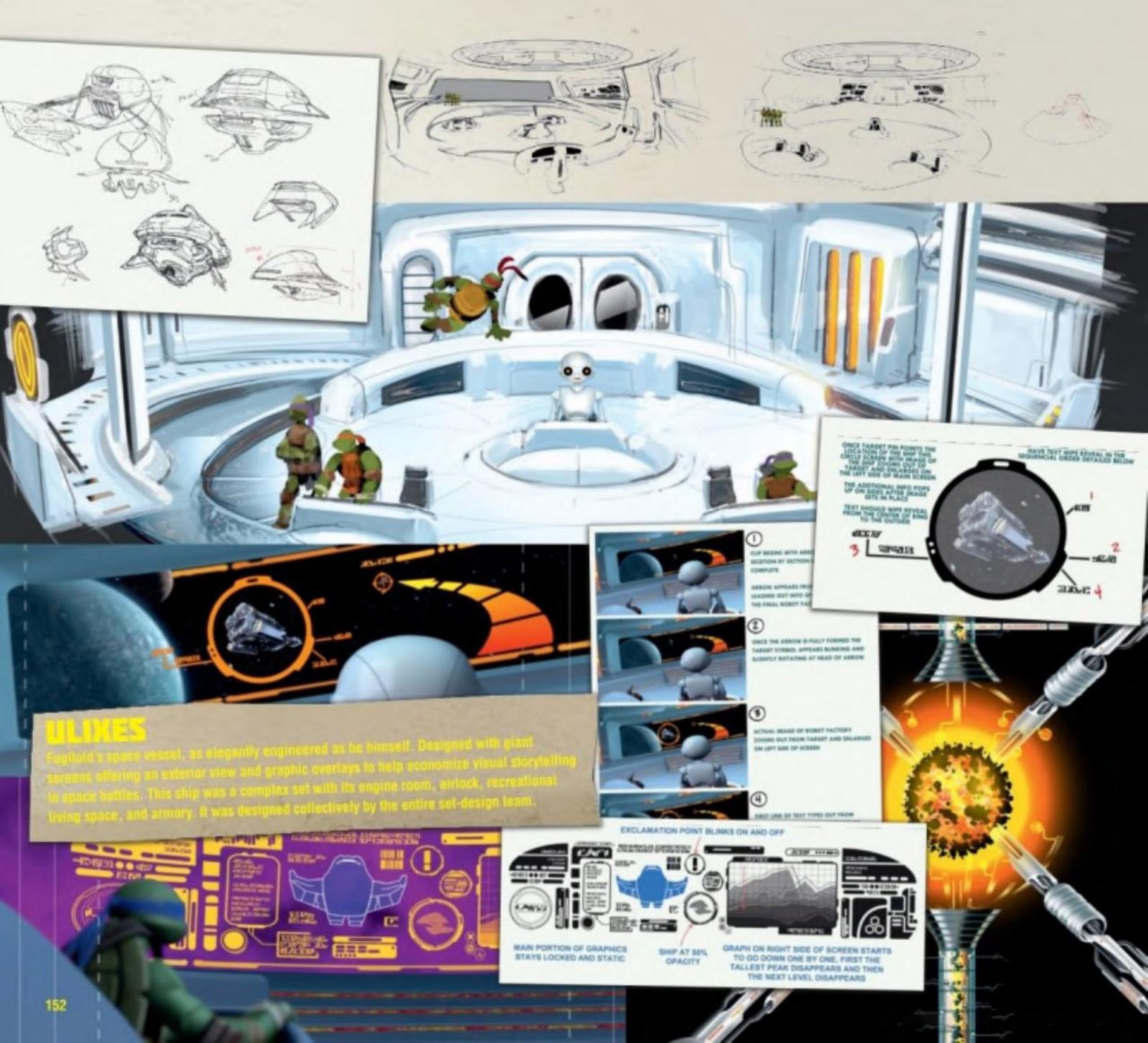
The hope was to finally produce a live-action equivalent television series that the Turtles loved to watch, which would have been accomplished in the same CG that the Turtles were created with themselves. Unfortunately, time and money did not allow for it, so we went with an overdrawn and overdetailed style that was prevalent throughout the early '90s in television animation. Showcasing how poorly Captain Ryan had aged was a nice touch. Glen killed it again with these designs.



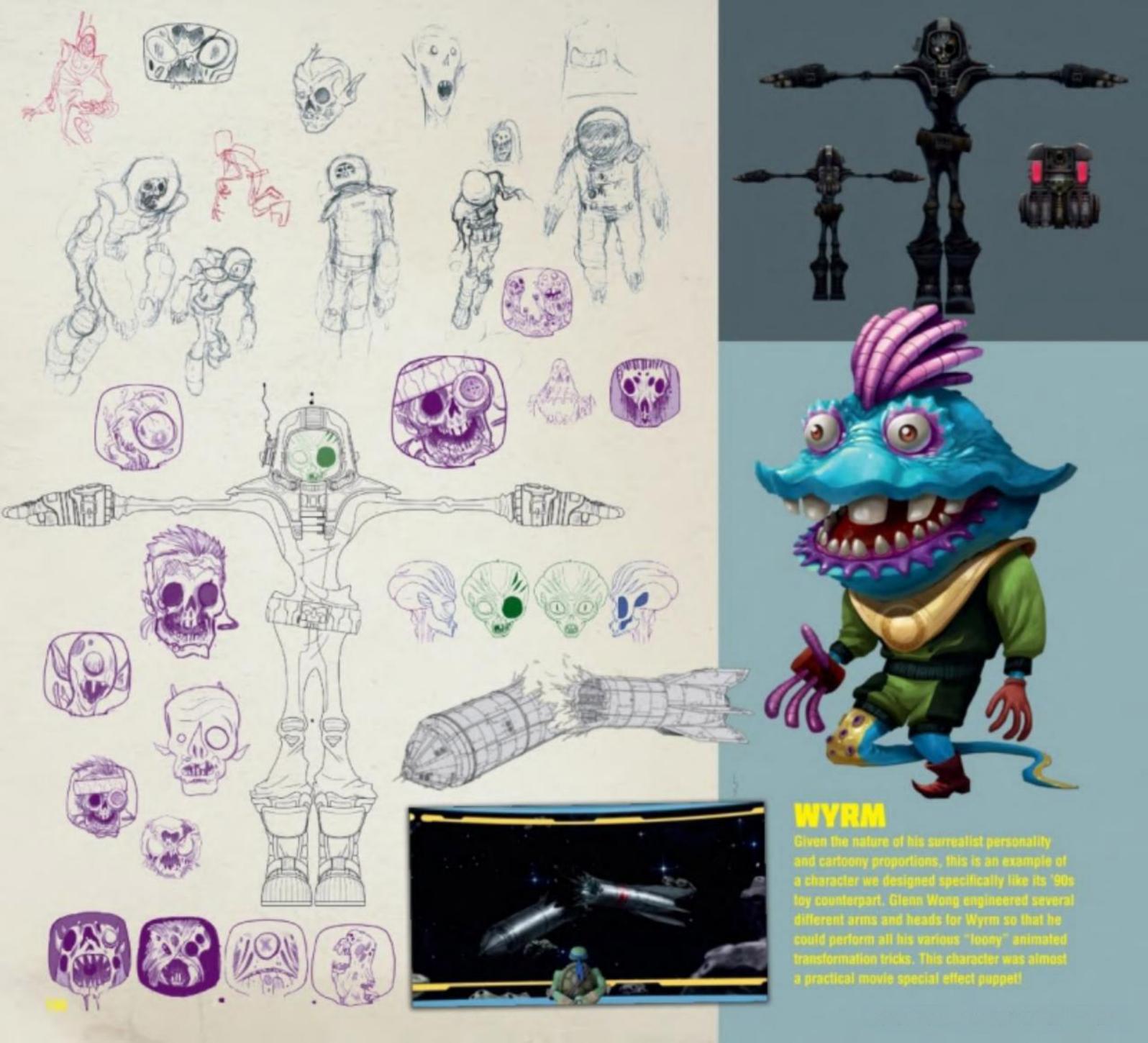


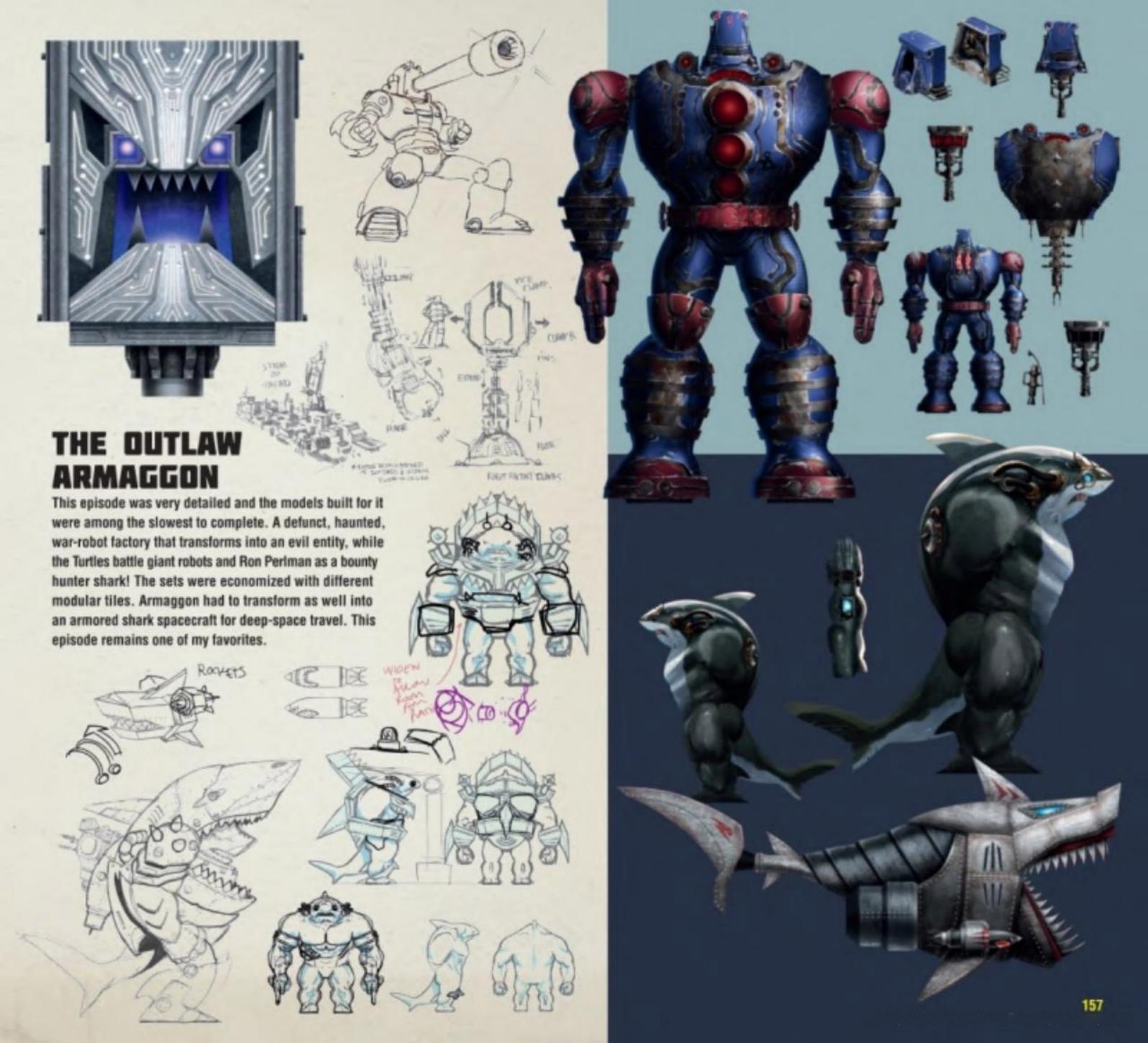
















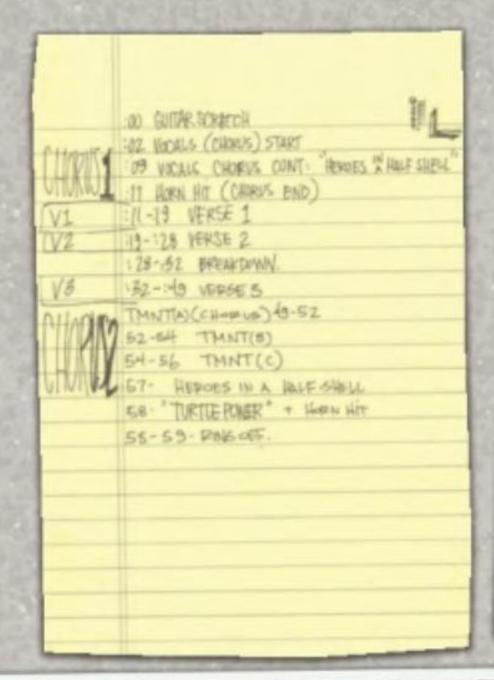




OPENING TITLE **SEQUENCE**

I remember this looming early in production: the creeping fear that I would soon have to storyboard the title sequence. It was expected of me and the pressure wasn't too bad. People kept saying: "it needs to be the greatest title sequence ever." I remember doing it all in one day-I went all night, finishing around roughly 8 a.m.

Scenes of Splinter bounding down fire escapes home to his baby Turtles were cut along with the presentation of headbands to the team. I wanted to see the team use proper technique in the title sequence, styled after martial arts classic Sister Street Fighter.



TMNT Theme Lyrics (pass 2)

16-15 Here we go it's the lean green ninja team, A. () 15-15 On the scene cool teems doing ninju things, E. ..

15-17 So extreme out the sewer like lazer beams C. 5

17-19 Get rocked with the shell shock p pizza kings

19-21 Can't stop these radical dudes, E.

The secret of the occe,

Made the chosen few, E 25-15 Emerge from the shadows to make their move, 6

25-28 The good guys win and the bad guys lose 2004 H.

Leonardo's the leader in blue 1-3f

191-36 Does anything it takes to get his ninjus through. I Se 31 Donatello is the fellow J

Han a way machines

18 - 14 Apphael's got the most atsitude on the team K. 11-16. Michelangelo

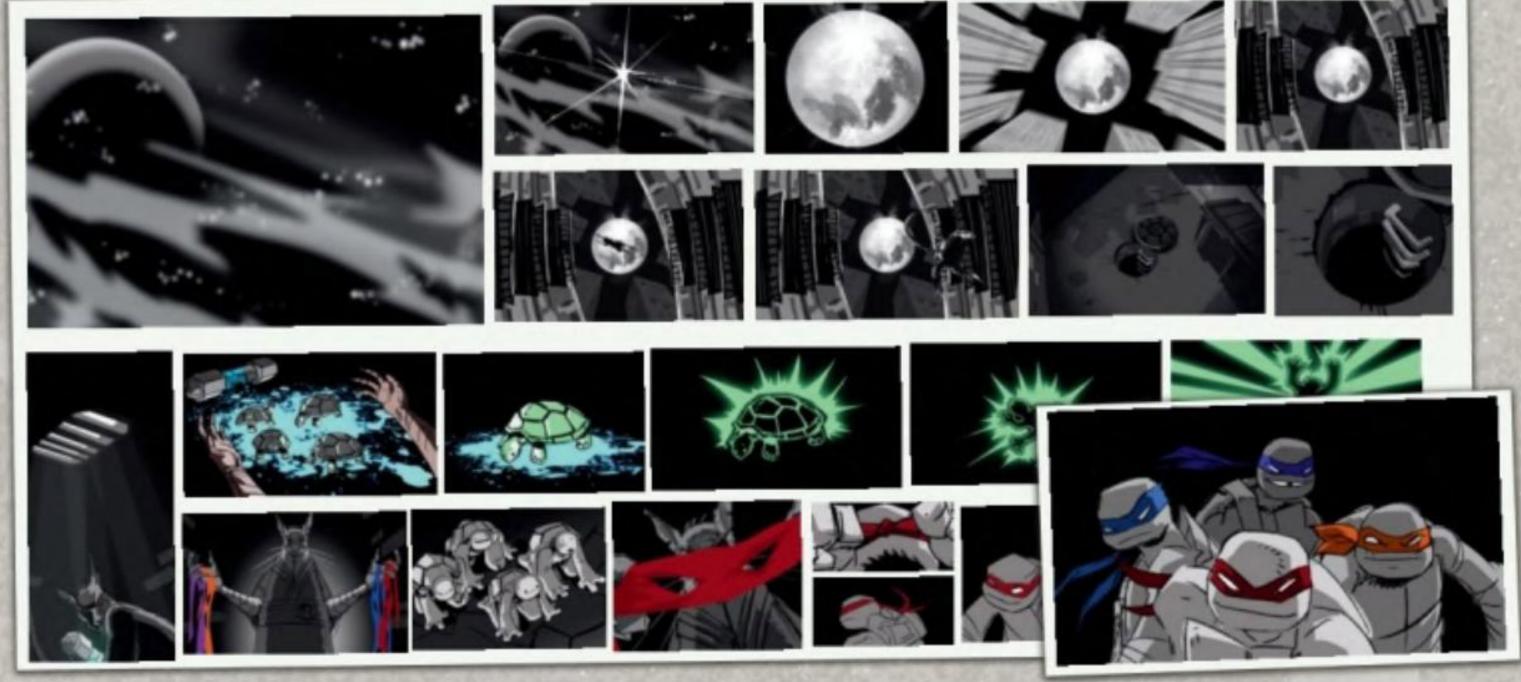
2-43 He's one of a kind L

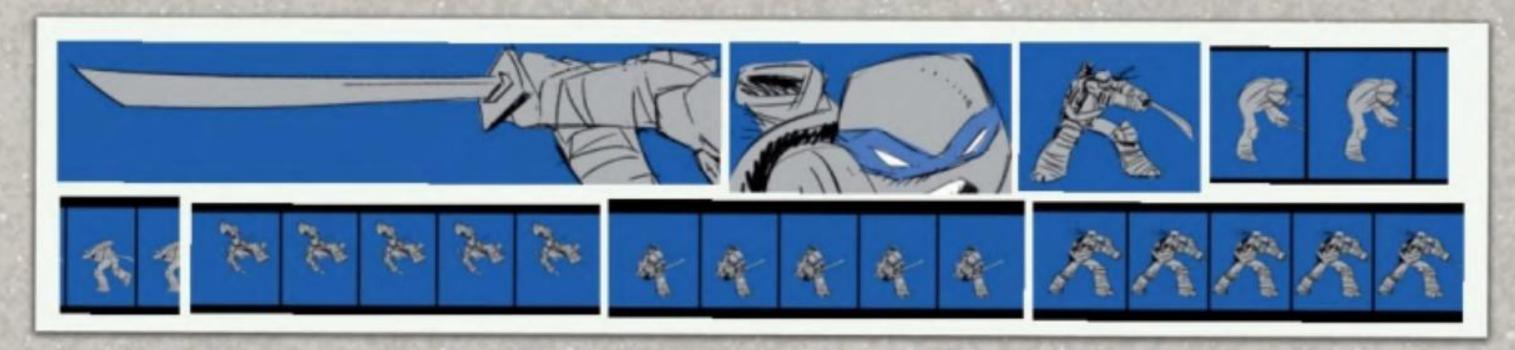
45-145. And you know just where to find him when it's party time

15-12 Mester splinter

Targht them every single skill they need M

1971 in To be one less mean green N Incredible team!













The hand drawn graphics were being established with the name card sequence of the four brothers. No one ever discussed or debated my choice to use their casual names—Donnie, Mikey, Leo, Raph—in the graphics.





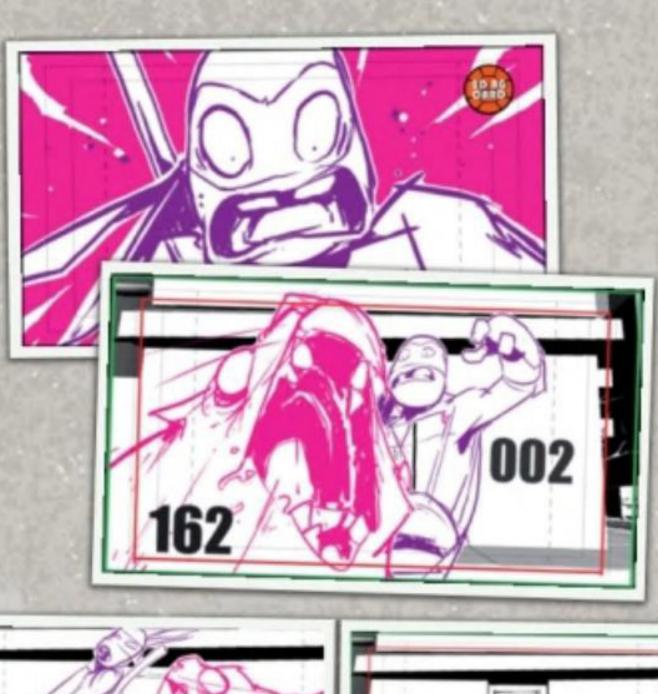
Animating the cover to Mirage Studios' TMNT #1 was something I'd wanted to do forever—it closed a moment I had as a kid, seeing that book in a comic shop in 1984.



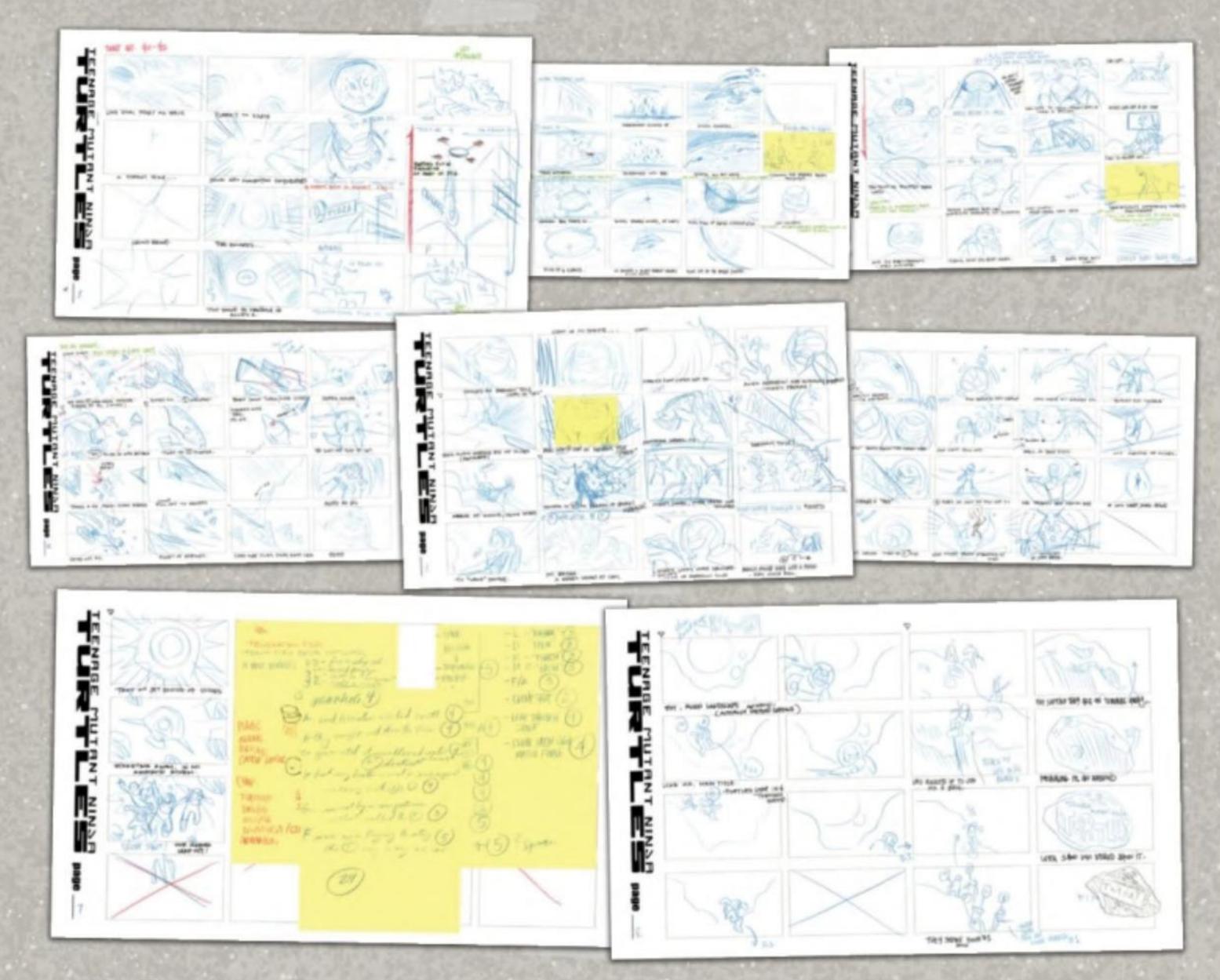
DREAM BEAVERS

Sheldon Vella gets weird with a dream beaver. Sheldon had a way of mixing terror with so much personality it would pass as extremely funny, but it was actually just really disturbing and inimitable.





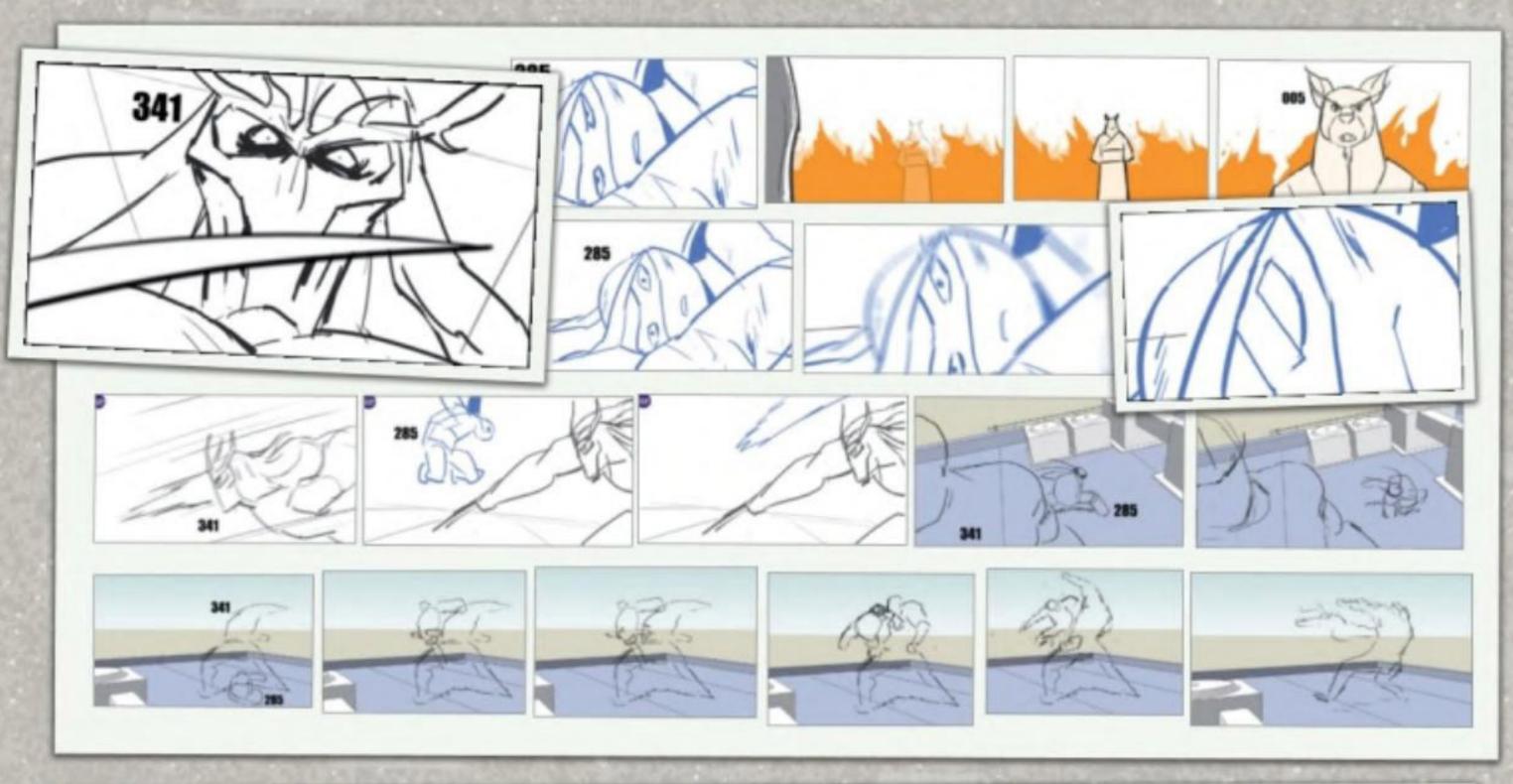




SPACE TITLE SEQUENCE

My storyboard notes for the season four title sequence. I started by "slugging" the timing of the theme song into seconds so I could understand the timing. I passed these to our story artist Sara Partington who owned it!







Often with storyboards, you'd try to give specific artists a scene that suited their abilities and tastes. This sequence of Leo

ending the Shredder was envisioned by Adam Lucas who does things like no one else I've known. There's no father to his style.

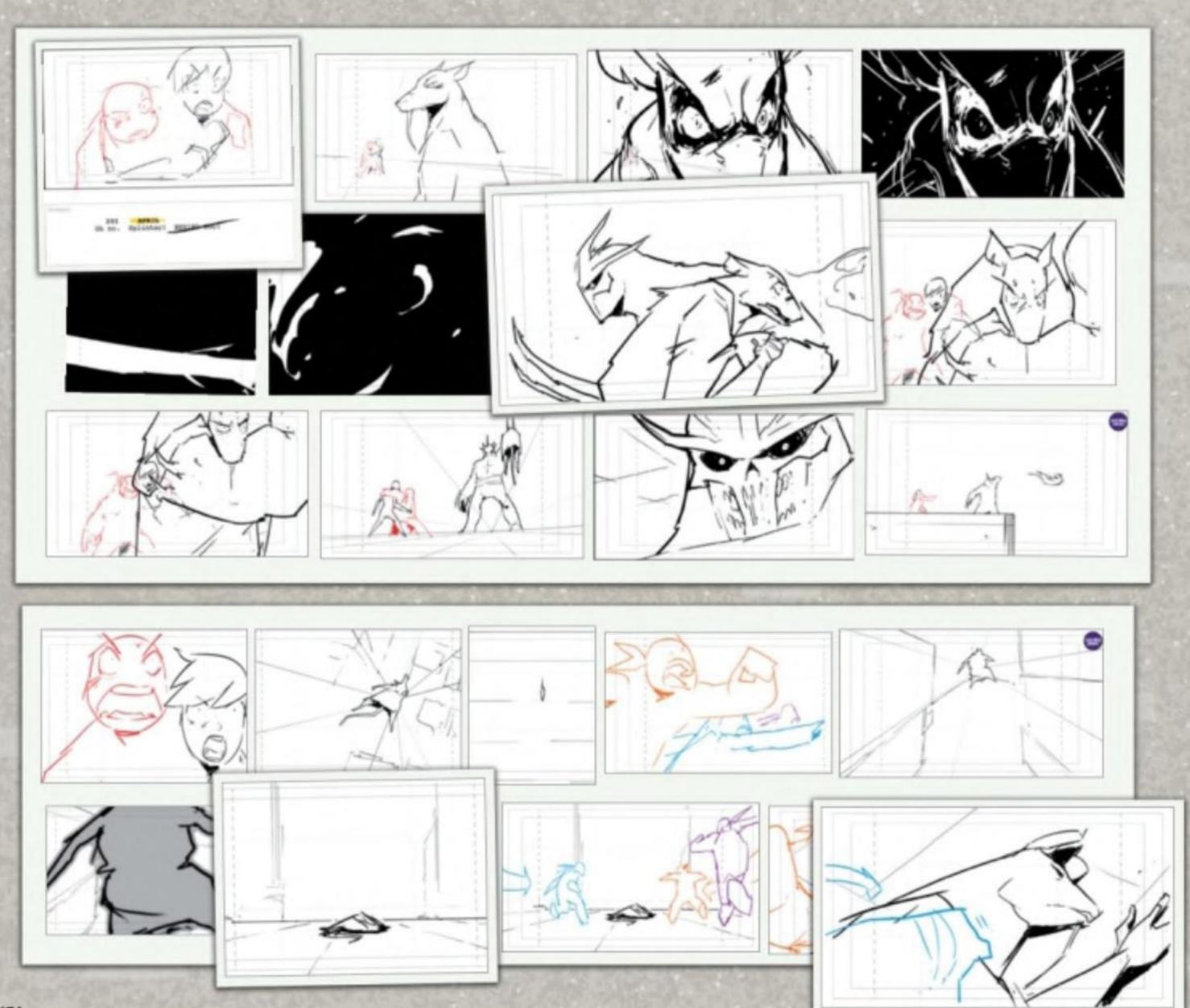
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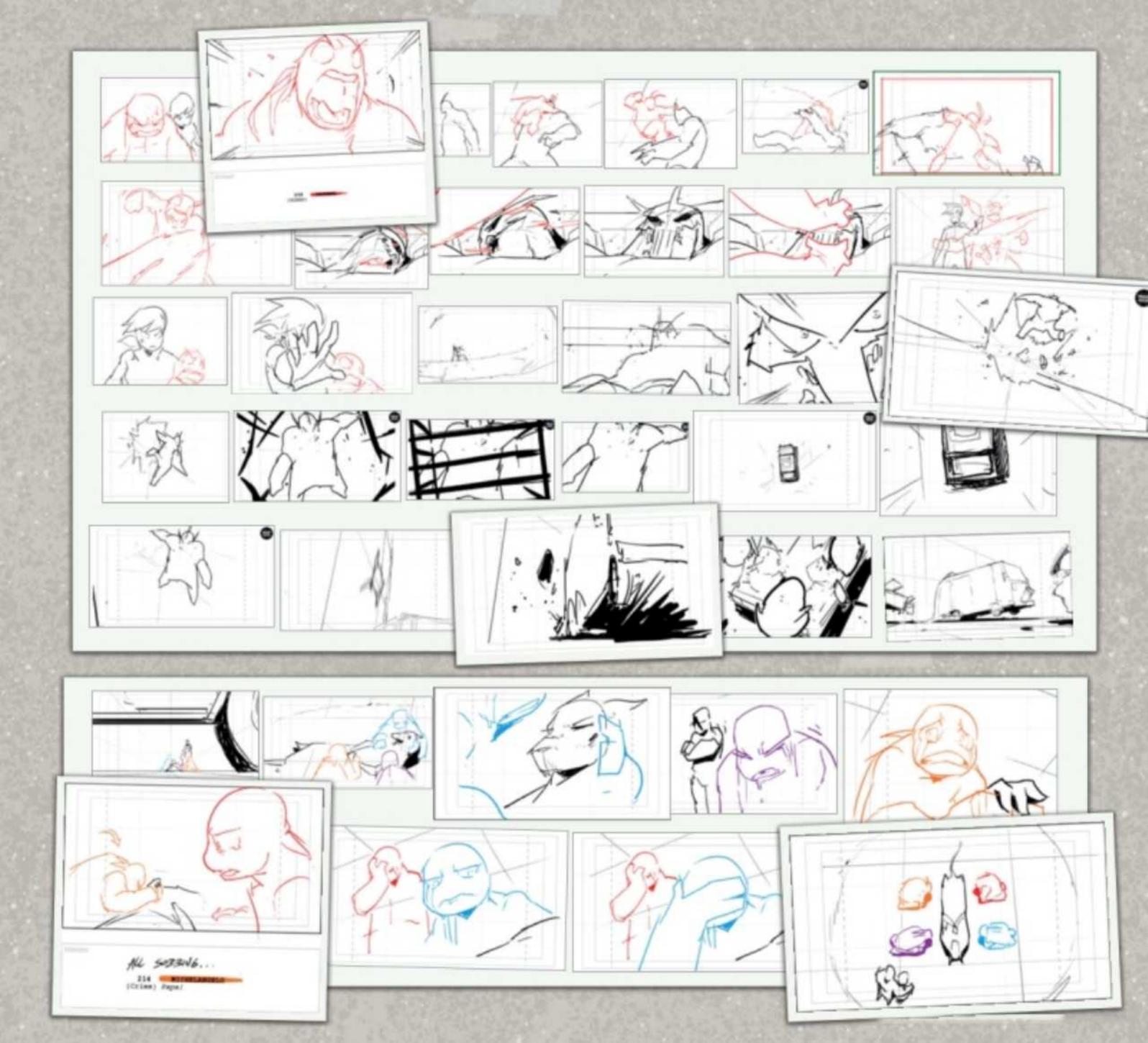


This sequence ended with the beheading of the Shredder monster, hence the drawing's change in style. Director Rie Koga had to redraw the sequence until it was approved by the network. Adam had already moved onto the next episode.

DEATH OF SPLINTER

This was so hard to watch. I saw it through every stage of production and every time it hurt more. Sheldon Vella draws the final moments of Master Splinter . . . 'nuff said!



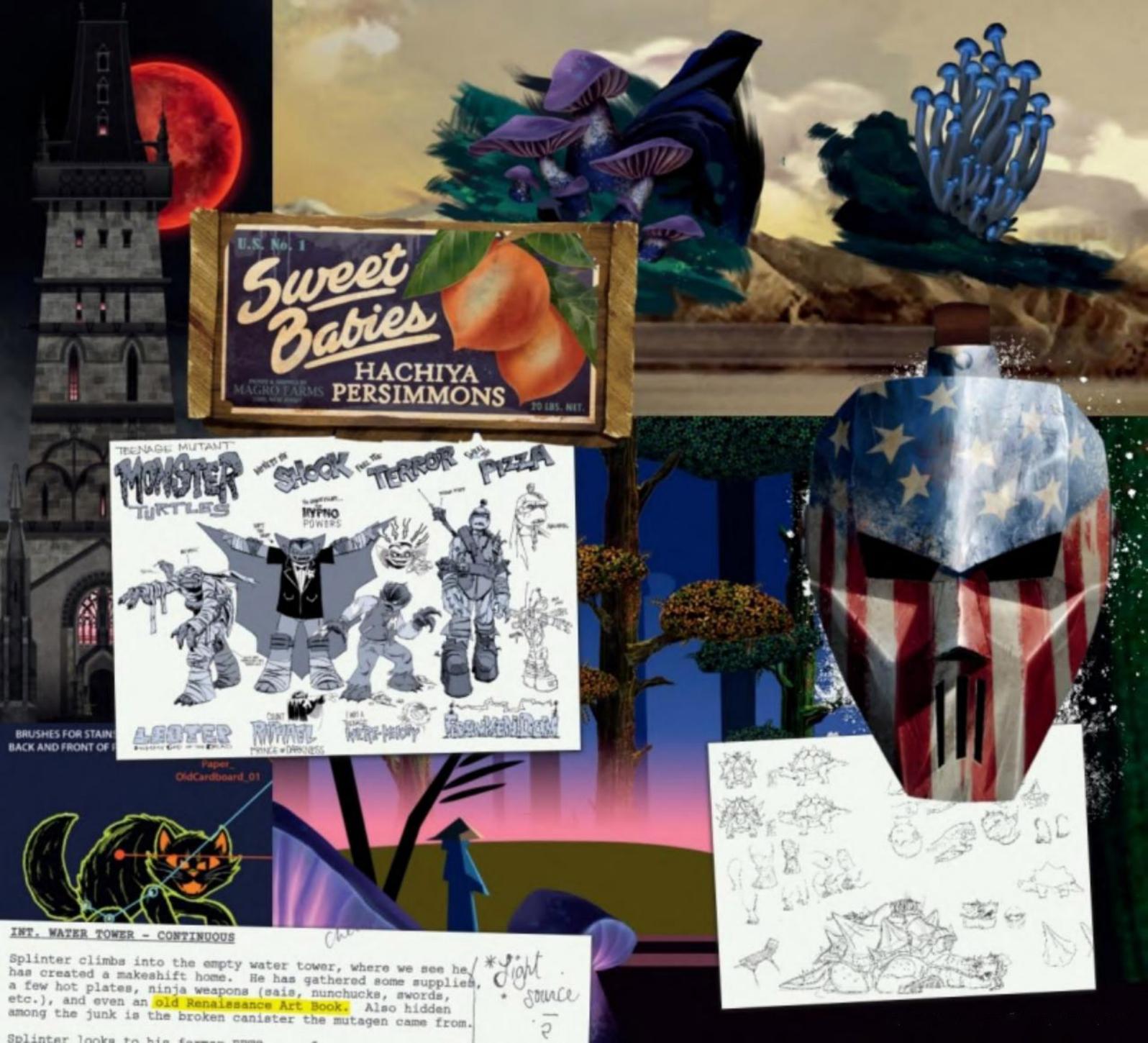


LEO VS. THE CREEP

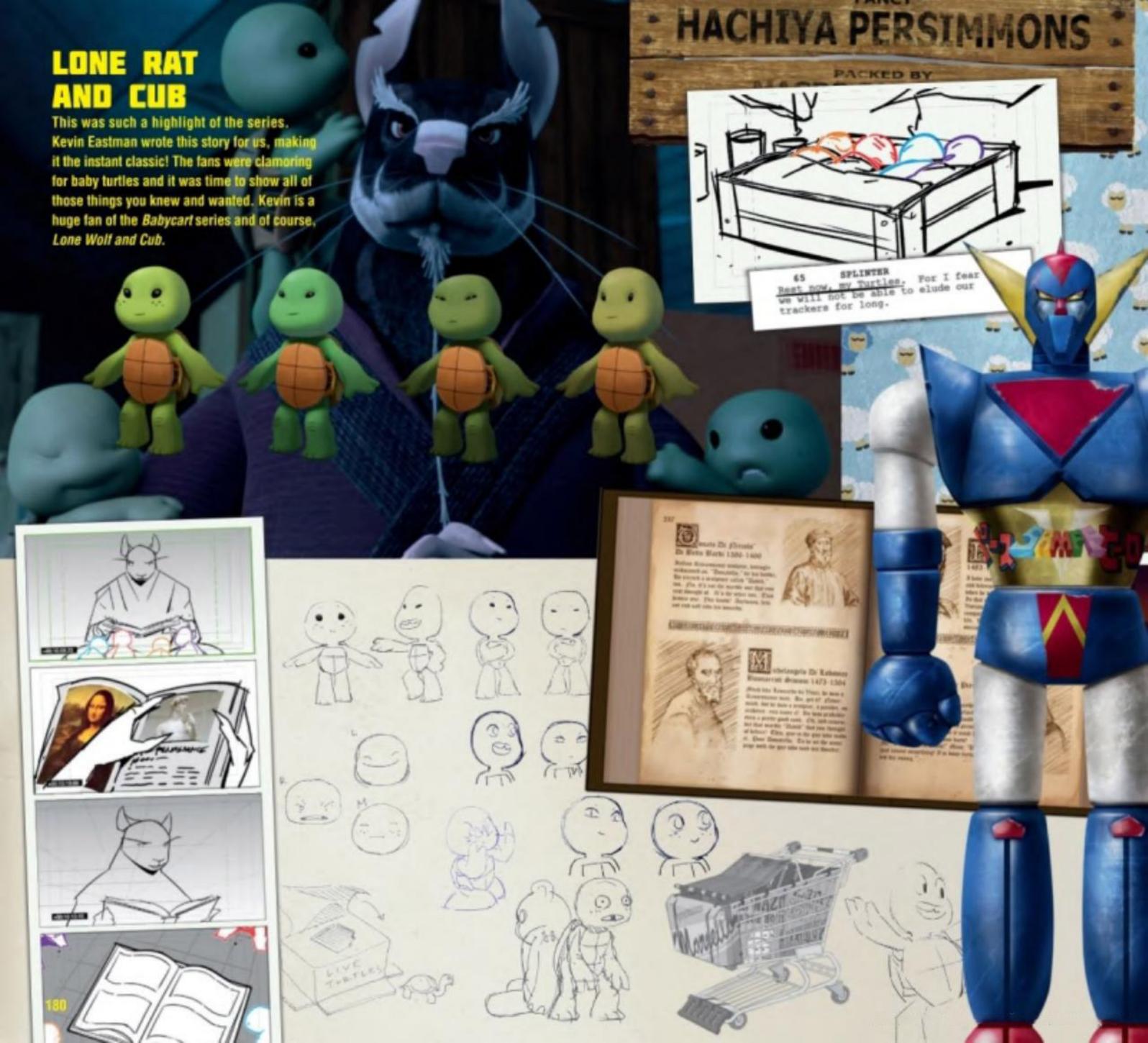
Miki Brewster shows off some of her cold-blooded fighting sensibilities. Miki not only could draw well and remarkably fast, but she'd pitch her boards brilliantly, complete with acting (and lots of profanity). Seeing her do that regularly is a fond memory.







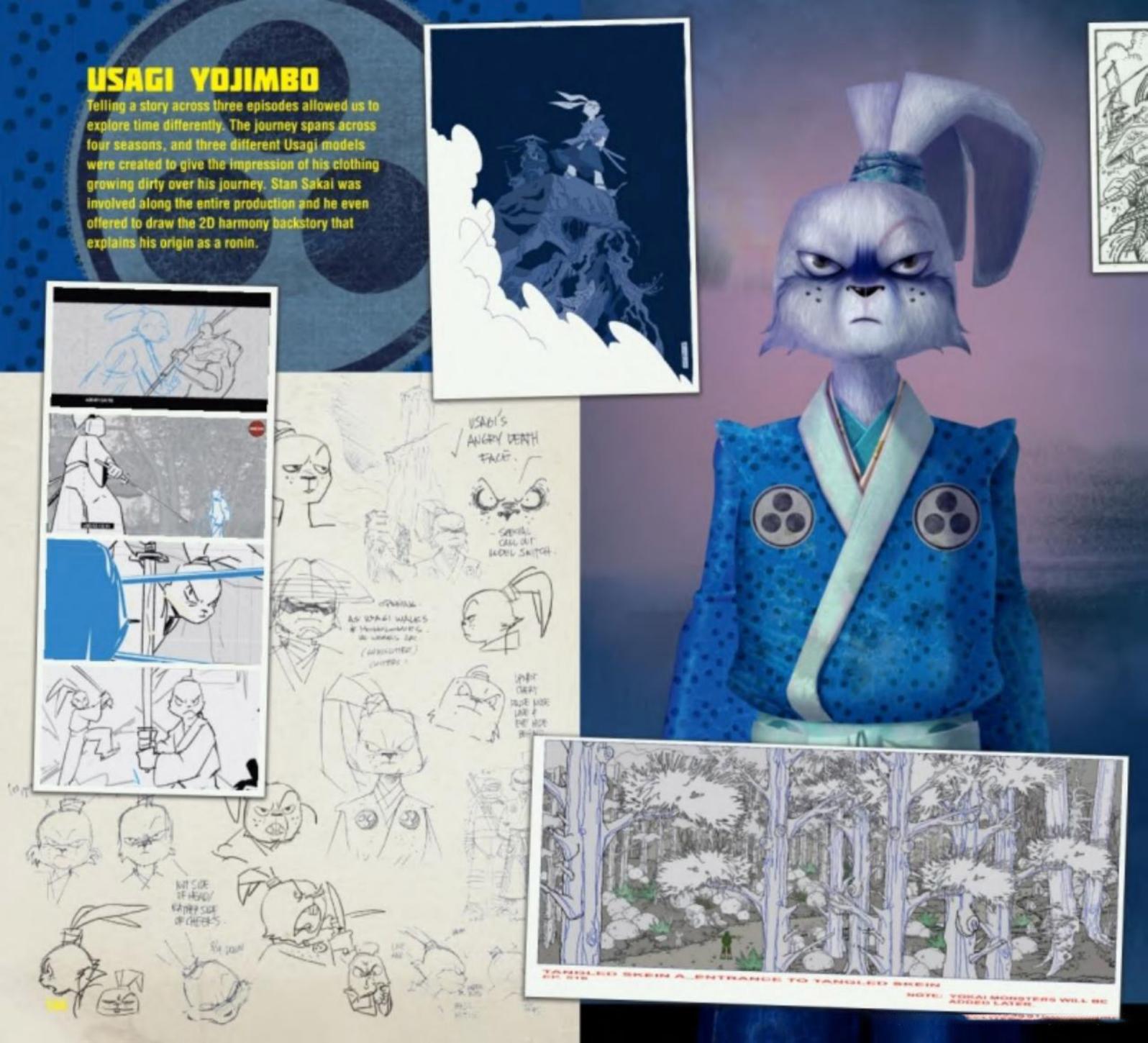












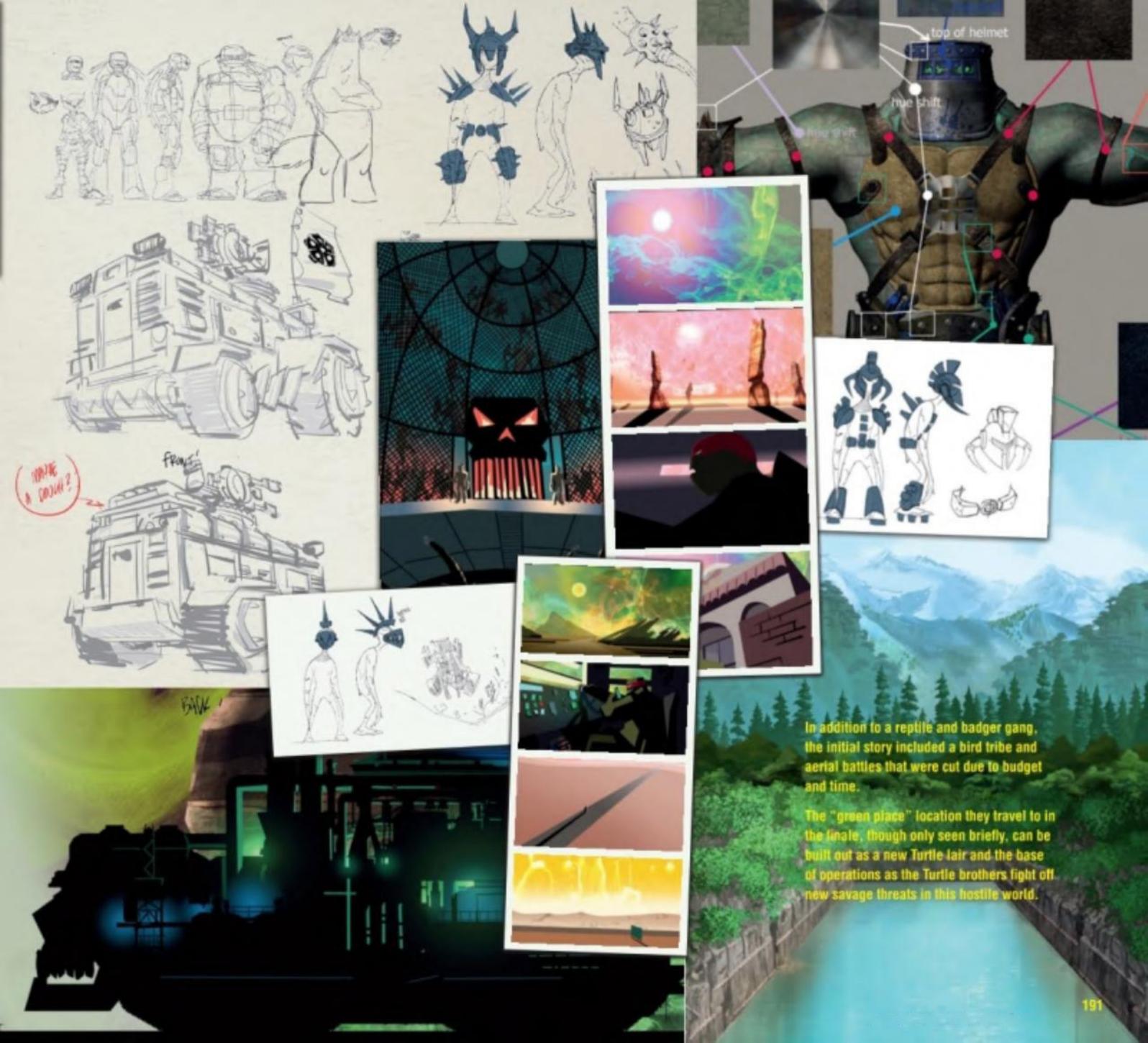




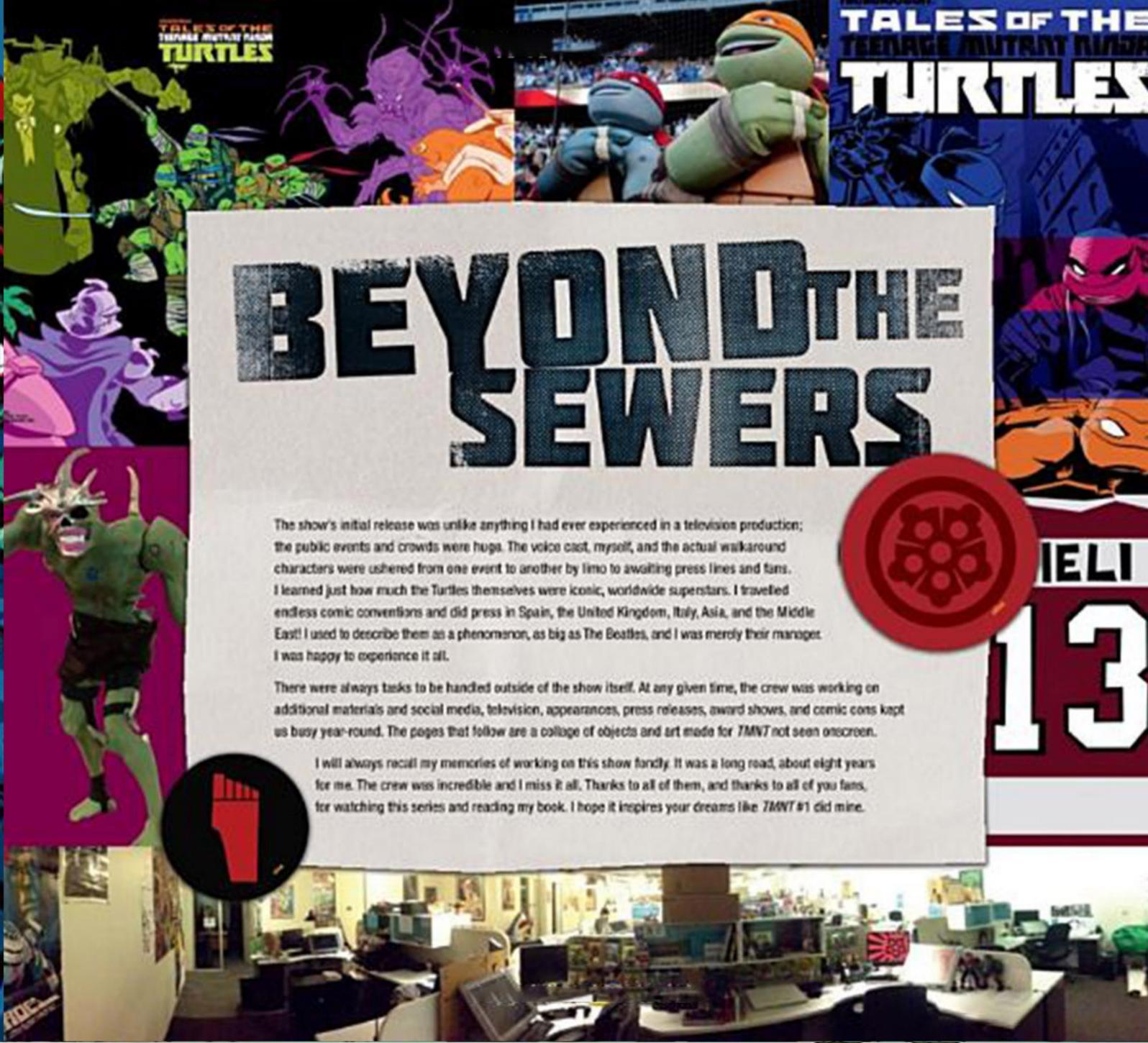












To the right is the poster in the record booth, signed by each and every actor as they entered to perform their roles. Can you believe that the image in the top right is cake? As seen on Cake Wars.















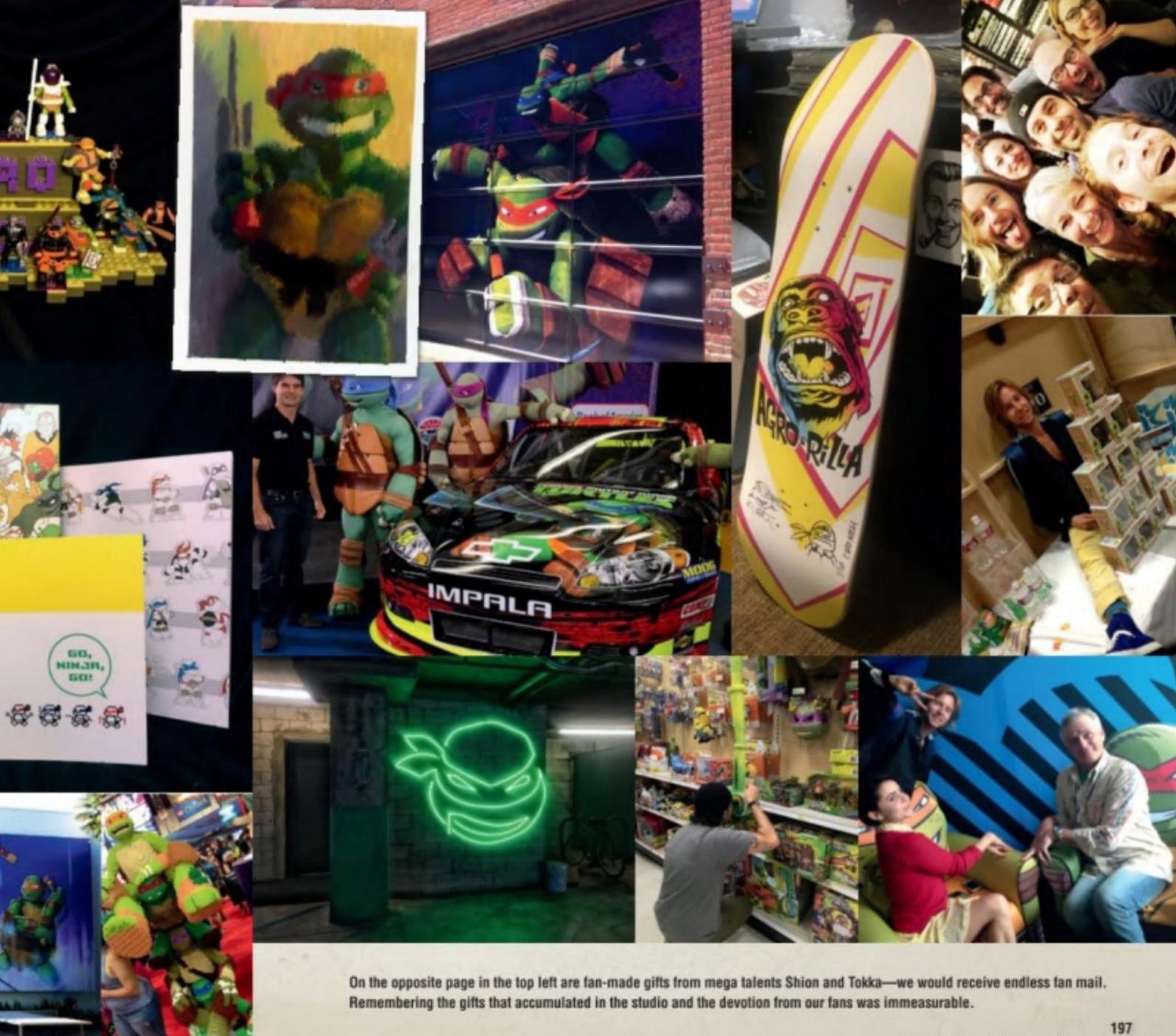














These Turtle maquettes created for me by the toy team are my favorite objects from the show.



Miho and I supervising the production of the walkaround actor suits—that was a fun process.



The San Diego Comic-Con posters created by myself and the crew every July . . . do you have them all?



STORY ARTISTS

Directors

Michael Chang Ben Jones Rie Koga Juan Meza-Leon Sebastian Montes Alan Wan

Storyboard Artists

Steve Ahn
Miki Brewster
JJ Conway
Michael Fong
George Gipson
Micah Gunnell
Jae Hong Kim
Chong Suk Lee
Ben Li
Adam Lucas
Samuel Montes
Sarah Partington
Ed Tadem
Sheldon Vella
Luke Weber

Storyboard Revisionists

Matthew Bordenave
Jasmine Goggins
Justin Lee
Ruolin Li
Christine Liu
Christopher Luc
Max Lawson
David Maximo
Samira Ongchua
Caleb Thomas
Fabien Tong
Aeri Yoon
Jessica Zammit

20 ARTISTS

Art Directors

Irineo Maramba Nadia Vurbenova-Mouri

Character Designers

Kris Anka Jose Garibaldi Dou Hong Steve Jones Glen Murakami Mayumi Nose Felipe Smith Glenn Wong

Background Designers

Rodel Gravo Hak Joon Kang Caesar Martinez Gary Mouri

Prop Designers

Ronald Catiggay Art Lee Pakin Liptawat Damon Moran Byron Penaranda Jack Rossi Jeff Wong Michal Wright-Ward

Background Color

Lane Garrison Jermaine Jose Gerald De Jesus Jeffry Mazon Patrick Morgan Miho Tomimasu

CG ARTISTS

Character Modelers

Daniel Aronoff Joshua Brock Visen Brnicevic Joe Dela Torre Leonard Dill Zechariah Hutton Dev Karna Russell Tracy Jr. Vypac Voeur

Patrick Warner

Environment Modelers

Joe Brogno John Cahoon Jose Cespedes Spenser Flugum Matt McCart Asako Miyamori

Character Technical Directors

Lisa Anderson Waleed Boghosian Edward Grampp III Zhuo Fan Huang David Taegyu Kim Mike Navarro Derek Prieur Beverly Sage Jonathan Soto

Texture Artists

Jessica Brown
Anthony Esposito III
Juan Gil
Laura Hohman
Tracey Marzioli
Leticia Kao
Candice Stephenson
Jessica Whiteside
Lorin Zilka

Asset Finalers

Sean Collins
Taylor Eldredge
Alex Portin
Ana Jimenez
Christopher Heckey
Thomas Thomas III
Julio Vega

Animation Supervisors

Laura Barbera Robert Castaneda Jason Meier Dennis Shelby

Animators

Kim Hazel Tyler Kakac Rory Riggins Patrick Rossano Arut Tantasirin

Lighting and Compositing Artists

Yomi Adenuga Eric Hawkins Michael Heinz Cody Jacobson Patrick Krebs Jessica von Medicus Tobias White

FX Artists

Matt Cawood Matthew Bennett Adam Briggs Matthew Jones Raymond King Russell Richardson Jr. Brent Tyler Chris Wombold ART / Film & Video

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